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Changing continuities:  
Multi-activity in the network politics of Colobane, Dakar

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## List of acronyms

AFP	Alliance des Forces de Progrès
AJC	Amicale des jeunes de Colobane
ASC	Association Sportive et Culturelle
ASPAT	Association Sénégalaise pour la Paix, la lutte contre l'Alcool et la Toxicomanie
BDS	Bloc Démocratique Sénégalais
DMWM	Dahiratoul Mourstarchidine wal Moustarchidaty (Moustarchidine-movement)
FAL	Front pour l'Alternance
FNJP	Fonds National de Promotion de la Jeunesse
GIE	Groupement d'intérêt économique
NGOs	Non-governmental associations
ONCAD	Office National de Coopération et Assistance au Développement
PDS	Partie Démocratique Sénégalais
PS	Partie Socialiste
PUR	Partie de l'Unité et du Rassemblement
ROSCAs	Rotating savings and credit associations
SAP	Structural adjustment programme
SENELEC	Société National d'Électricité du Sénégal
UNICEF	The United Nations Children's Fund
URD	Union pour le Renouveau Démocratique
WB	World Bank
WHO	World Health Organization



## Summary

This dissertation analyses the local political space and practices in the neighbourhood of Colobane in Dakar, Senegal. In 2000, Senegal experienced the first change of regime since independence, leading to popular hopes of democratic consolidation and a solution to the enduring socio-economic crisis. The everyday politics of the poor neighbourhood of Colobane is informed by these hopes for and processes of societal and political change, as well as the context of material deprivation.

Local political practices are characterised by multi-activity and the importance of personal contacts and social networks. This personalised network politics is a crucial feature of both local and national Senegalese politics, and include both direct and indirect relations and contact. Hence, local inhabitants and authorities may use face to face encounters and negotiations, or intermediaries, in their political endeavours and battles for access to symbolic and material resources. The multi-activity of local actors entails that they simultaneously cultivate a variety of personal relations and engage in different social networks and institutions in political, economic and religious fields to promote their interests. For instance, an inhabitant of Colobane may approach a local politician, *notable* or mosque for help to secure basic needs. Membership in local associational life, such as women's groups and religious associations, can give access to mutual help and potential saving functions that help manage everyday expenses. Engagement in local associations is also a strategy of local politicians, along with the nurturing of individual and personal relations. Their goals of political support and legitimate authority are closely related to the provision of economic support. Thus, local state-society relations often take the form of negotiated exchanges of material and symbolic resources.

The study thus adopts a broad understanding of politics which moves beyond the institutions of the state and party politics, to include informal arrangements, relations and networks in various social fields. The material is produced through ethnographic fieldwork, and methods like interviews, informal conversation and observation. A broad range of actors and institutions, and their relations, have been analysed. This involves not only the inhabitants of the neighbourhood, but also politicians and bureaucrats of the local commune, as well as more customary authorities such as local notables, *délégués de quartier* and imams. In addition, the

many local collective organisations have been investigated, for instance the management committees of mosques and other social, economic and religious associations. The dissertation highlights the manifold ways of doing politics in the neighbourhood, as well as how relations and power is produced and negotiated. This involves a politicized understanding of the concept of social capital.

Network politics in Colobane are characterised by changing continuities. The local political processes in Colobane relate to the wider social and political changes in Senegal. This is manifested in significant discursive changes and some altered practices across social fields, such as an increased questioning of authority and a rejection of politicians resulting from the general crisis of politics. Still, there are striking continuities in social and political practices. The established relations and practices of network politics, often of a clientelistic nature, are still reproduced in the local politics of Colobane. The result is paradoxical political logics, where demands and expressions towards democratic politics merge with the established practices local actors claim they want to change. For instance, various local associations operate within and reproduce a fragmented local civil society, when trying to juggle these paradoxical logics. On the one hand they reject the clientelism of political parties and hope for joint actions with other local groups and national and international NGOs. On the other hand, they need material resources to mobilise members and realise goals and activities. These resources, however, are most readily accessible through alliances with political parties and politicians which again fuel antagonism and competition. In the context of socio-economic crisis and with the sustained logics of clientelist exchanges and accumulation in party politics, established practices and relations are reproduced, despite vital discursive and practical changes. The situation of local network politics in Colobane is one of paradoxical changing continuities.

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# 1. Introduction

In March 2000, Senegal experienced its first change of regime since independence. Abdoulaye Wade, the candidate of the opposition coalition, *Front pour l'Alternance* (FAL)<sup>1</sup>, won the second round of the presidential elections, and so ended forty years of *Partie Socialiste* (PS) rule (Diop 2006). Despite a strong tension that marked the election and its preceding campaign, the fears of a political impasse and eruptions of violence and chaos were fortunately not realised (Diop, Diouf and Diaw 2000). A peaceful transition was secured as the departing President Diouf promptly acknowledged his loss and accepted his replacement by Wade, his long-time rival from the *Partie Democratique Senegalaise* (PDS) (Galvan 2001). This change of power, known as *l'Alternance*, was consolidated through the legislative and local elections of 2001 and 2002. These extensive political alterations caused enthusiasm and hopes among the Senegalese population for democratic consolidation (Mbow 2008) and a solution to the socio-economic crisis.

The context of the election of new political authorities was persistent crises leading to renegotiations in the Senegalese social contract. This social contract is constituted by the triangular relations of mutual dependence between the population, the political authorities and the *marabouts* (Cruise O'Brien 1992). *Marabouts*, leaders of the religious Sufi orders in Senegal, have served as intermediaries between state and society since colonial times (Coulon 1983, Cruise O'Brien 1971, Cruise O'Brien, Diop and Diouf 2002, Villalon 1995, 2004). The basis of the social contract is the close relations between marabouts and their followers, who have granted their religious leaders legitimate authority not only in religious, but also economic, social and political matters. Thus, the marabouts gained the power to negotiate with the political authorities. The PS needed the marabouts to deliver the loyalty of their followers, to secure political legitimacy and votes (Beck 1996, 2008, Creevey 2006). In return, the marabouts and Sufi orders were conceded symbolic recognition and economic resources by the secular state. Some of these resources were distributed to religious followers, presenting further motivation for participation in religious and political network relations (Cruise O'Brien 2003). The institutions and networks of the Sufi orders have been central parts of the everyday lives of the Senegalese, because of their original religious functions, but also because they have provided other favours and assets that are valuable in a situation of

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<sup>1</sup> This coalition was mainly made up of the *Coalition pour l'Alternance 2000*, organised around Abdoulaye Wade, and the *Coalition de l'Espoir 2000* led by Moustapha Niasse.

material scarcity (Piga 2002). As long as this exchange of material and symbolic resources benefited all three parties, the system was reproduced.

Strained by socio-economic and political crises, however, the social contract was renegotiated. The Senegalese population experienced deteriorating living conditions due to the economic crisis emerging in the 1970s, which was reinforced by the short-term political strategies of the PS. During the 1980s and 1990s, the population increasingly expressed their dissatisfaction and questioned the regime's legitimacy (Creevey and Vengroff 1997, Diop and Diouf 1990). These political and economic crises intensified the established practice of the PS to distribute state resources to clients in exchange for political support and votes to stay in power. However, popular protest was not silenced, and the continued pressure for change led to a gradual process of political reform and democratisation (Creevey, Ngomo and Vengroff 2005, Cruise O'Brien 2003, Villalon 1999) in combination with the demands and discourse of the political opposition for accountable, democratic and transparent politics. These political modifications and crises affected and reflected other adjustments in the social contract characterising the national political space, due to its relational nature. Through emerging discourses that distinguished between political and religious authority and spheres, the marabouts were also confronted with the popular demands for change (Beck 1996, Selboe 2001, Villalon 2007). To uphold their positions of power, they abstained from the earlier practices of directing their followers to vote for the delegitimised PS regime and, at least apparently, reverted to the religious field (Beck 2008, Gellar 2005). These crises and changes, and the sustained pressure from the population, ultimately led to the change of regime through the elections of 2000-2002. As the demands for *sopi* (change in Wolof<sup>2</sup>) were realised, and the promises of the new regime signalled the prospect of a new politics breaking with the established practices of the PS regime, the population expected real improvements in their living conditions as well as expanded political opportunities.

These rather extensive social, religious and political transformations constitute the contextual background for this dissertation. The society-induced renegotiations of the social contract and the new discourses and initial practices possibly indicating a greater separation of political and religious identities and fields (Selboe 2001) and a transition towards democratic politics, leads to a focus on the practices of the Senegalese population. The subject matter of network

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<sup>2</sup> Wolof is one of Senegal's national languages and also holds a position as its *lingua franca*.



politics, where the access to economic capital is as central as the struggle for political power, draw attention to people's everyday lives and living conditions as part of the framing of national and local politics. Also, the apparent importance of personal relations in Senegalese network politics, denotes the significance of concrete face-to-face encounters and negotiations of the exchange of symbolic and material resources. Thus, this PhD project is empirically motivated by an interest in how this network politics and the general processes and changes at the national level relate to local-level realities and practices. In addition, an academic interest in local politics in general, and a perspective from 'below', on the everyday practices and manoeuvres of local inhabitants and authorities, in particular, has informed the study. A focus on local politics and popular participation has marked various strands of development discourse and practice over the last decades (Harriss, Stokke and Törnquist 2004, Mohan and Stokke 2000). The critique of the related tendency to romanticise and essentialise the local and to ignore conflicts and inequalities, has entailed a growing interest in the politics of the local, and led to an increased focus on local political practices and power relations also in political geography (Mohan and Stokke 2008). It is argued that greater attention must be given not only to how the local relates to broader processes and structures, but also how it is produced and used by various actors. This study may be said to be a response to these questions, and to the related calls for concrete and contextualised analyses of local politics and power relations.

The combined empirical and academic interest in such local political analysis motivating this study also entails a broader conception of politics and political practices, which moves beyond the formal political sphere of political parties and state institutions (Stokke and Selboe forthcoming). It is stimulated by how religious, economic and political fields are deeply intertwined in Senegalese politics, and the relational and personalised nature of power and political practices. Both elites and more subordinate political actors base their strategies and habitual practices on such network politics, whether it is for political support and authority or everyday survival and basic needs. Thus, the inequality between actors, and the associated disparity in possibilities and resources, does not automatically mean that those in less favourable positions are politically inactive. Instead, the manifold ways of doing politics and creating relations by various political actors, result in a plurality of local politics. That political agency, and thus practices aimed at securing both symbolic and material resources, may be performed in numerous manners also entails that their multiple expressions often intersect social fields. Thus, this thesis aims to examine the political aspects of social,

economic and religious networks, practices and forms of mobilisation, without excluding those of formal politics. It also analyses the relations between different actors, and how these are negotiated to improve possibilities or promote interests.

## Research questions

The contextual interest motivating this study may be formulated into the underlying question of *how local political processes, practices and discourses relate to the national changes, crises and developments* presented above. It has also led to the exploratory purpose of this dissertation, which aims to analyse the plurality of local politics and mobilisation in the neighbourhood of Colobane in Dakar. The explicit focus has been on how the inhabitants engage in multiple ways, particularly through various social relationships and networks that compose the basis of network politics, to fight for their interests, improve their situation and influence political decisions. The study involves an analysis of not only the political practices of various local actors, but also the local political space and how it constitutes possibilities and constraints for different actors. This is related to the idea that political actors and their practices are constituted by and constitute the local political space. Thus, the research question asks:

*What characterises local political practices and the local political space in Colobane?*

By asking this twofold research question, I address how local actors engage and mobilise in their daily lives to promote their interests, for instance, to gain influence on their own living conditions in a context marked by poverty, or to obtain support as local politicians. As the objective is to explore the manifold ways in which inhabitants engage in and ‘do’ local politics, the question also deals with the multitude of social relations, the power differences between the actors that constitute them, and how these relations are produced and negotiated through connected practices. Analysing the political activities and strategies of the inhabitants of Colobane involves addressing how they relate to and draw upon different social, political, economic and religious networks, authorities, associations and institutions. These have plural characters and roles; in addition to their original functions, they also serve as political arenas and channels, as they are used to communicate and promote symbolic and material interests.

It is this web of discourses, institutions, actors and networks involved in political processes and practices that constitutes the local political space. The aim is to explore how these are used by different actors to attain political and economic goals according to their relative positions of power, and thus their unequal possibilities. This not only involves investigating the relations of formal political institutions like the municipal council of the commune, local state representatives, political parties and politicians, but also customary and other authorities, associations, discourses and organisations in religious and social fields.

When using the concept of *political practices*, I include both the material and symbolic aspects of practices. While I analytically define it also to comprise discursive practices, these are referred to as discourses throughout the thesis to clarify the distinction between what is said and what is done. Above, I explained my understanding of the term political as a broad one, going beyond formal political institutions to include the networks and establishments of social fields as well, in addition to the practices of both elites and more marginalised actors.

The concept of *political space*, as already signalled above, entails various aspects. First, I want to highlight its relational nature. This relationality of political spaces has several bearings. On the one hand, political space both structures and is structured by actors' practices. Just as the political space, and the web of actors, discourses, practices and institutions that constitute it, form the practices and strategies of actors, these simultaneously construct political space by reproducing or transforming it. On the other hand, and related to the preceding argument, the relational character of political spaces entails that the practices of one actor or changes in one area of the political space will affect its whole; by leading to transformations or continuities also in other, but related actors' practices and institutions. On a broader scale, the relationality of political spaces is not confined to a national or local political space, but also comprise the connections between them, as indicated by the interest in and underlying research question of their possible interrelation.

This leads to the second aspect of the concept of political space in this thesis; its geographical nature. The study is limited to the neighbourhood of Colobane in Dakar, a geographical and administrative space that makes up one of three neighbourhoods in one of the nineteen *communes d'arrondissements* of Dakar. However, as indicated above, this does not overrule the relational nature of political spaces. Thus, while I delimit my study to a geographical area, I do not see this as a defined boundary for the practices of local actors. Political struggles,

activities and practices are not contained within fixed geographical or administrative limits, but relate to and play out also on regional, national and international scales. For instance, the various social, economic, religious and political networks in which the inhabitants of Colobane engage and mobilise, cross such geographical delimitations. They also intersect social fields and include public and private spheres.

Despite, or because of, the amalgam of practices across geographical and social fields and spheres, and their close interrelations, I have chosen to present the findings from the research by splitting the analysis of local political practices and the local political space into three analytical categories. Using the division into a local political field, a local religious field and the associational life of the neighbourhood, involves a simplification of the complex political reality. While it means going against the contextual plurality, with blurred and overlapping boundaries, these features are acknowledged and pointed out throughout the dissertation.

## **Outline of the dissertation**

In chapter 2, I reflect on the process and situations of doing *ethnography and fieldwork in Colobane*. I considered such an open and flexible process of research best suited to answer the exploratory research question and underlying question of the project, as it would provide in-depth knowledge and rich understanding. During the ethnographic fieldwork in Colobane I used a mixture of methods like interviewing, participant observation and document collection. The interpersonal character of such research highlights the significance of social relations and draws attention to how knowledge is co-produced. It is constructed through concrete encounters and the related unconscious and deliberate negotiations and presentations of identities and positions, which involve the participants, the interpreter and the researcher. This demands a focus on the politics and power relations of research, as well as the situated and partial nature of the knowledges produced. Thus, in this chapter I account for my positionality and reflexivity in relation to the research process, and particularly the fieldwork in Colobane.

In chapter 3, I present and discuss *a conceptual framework for analysing network politics*. I argue that in order to analyse the plurality of political practices and the political space in Colobane and Senegal, it is fruitful to combine approaches on state-society relations, the

postcolonial African state and social practices. They enable a broad conception of politics, where a variety of social relations and networks that incorporate both elites and subordinated actors, provide access to both political power and economic capital through negotiations and practices across social fields. The state-in-society perspective highlights that state and society must be analysed relationally and conceptually ‘unpacked’, to reveal their often blurry boundaries and internal conflicts. Theories on neo-patrimonialism and Bayart’s perspective on African network politics, its material basis and symbolic nature, contextualise and concretise such state-society relations. Bourdieu’s theory of practice provides tools for further exploration of the logics of networks politics in Colobane, as well as the power relations and practices of actors.

Chapter 4 discusses *the (re)negotiations of the Senegalese social contract*, i.e. the intermediary role of religious authorities in Senegalese state-society relations. Here, the mutual dependency and reciprocal interaction between the state, the population and the marabouts is explored in more detail, along with its origin in the colonial period. Furthermore, the negotiated exchanges of the postcolonial contract are accounted for, and I explore how economic and political crises and religious debate led to the renegotiation of the social contract. A main point is that new discourses that emanated from popular and oppositional pressure, led to changed practices in various social fields. The result was political reform and liberalisation, as well as changes to the religious organisation and practices of marabouts, which made it possible for the population to vote according to personal conviction and obtain regime change. These great national changes constitute the contextual background for the analysis of local political practices and processes of the local political space in Colobane.

The next seven chapters concern the local analysis of the political space and practices of Colobane. In chapter 5, *the neighbourhood of Colobane* is briefly presented and *the inhabitants’ multi-activity in network politics* sketched out. The establishment of the neighbourhood and its current characteristics are accounted for, and I provide a short introduction to the importance of social networks and the inhabitants’ multi-activity in local network politics. The next six chapters are divided into three analytical categories; the local political field, the local religious field and the associational life of the neighbourhood. Their overlappings and concurrent practices and processes are, however, indicated to demonstrate the complexity and plurality of local network politics and the political space.

The first chapter of the part concerning the local political field, chapter 6, discusses the role of the '*délégués de quartier*' as *traditional mediators of local state-society relations*. When Colobane was established, these authorities enjoyed great authority as legitimate representatives of the population in relation to the French colonial administration. As administrative auxiliaries, the *délégués de quartier* are also state representatives, who provide inhabitants with the papers necessary for the issuing of official documents. They have several informal tasks, however, such as the mediation of conflicts, provision of information, and assistance of individual inhabitants. The politics of their appointment revolve around the power and position of both party politics and that of local notables. The future of the *délégués* in Colobane seems uncertain, as a change of generation among the original notables of the neighbourhood has led to the retirement or death of most of the *délégués*. In a situation of societal and generational changes, the question of renewal or continuation is unsure.

In chapter 7, on *local state-society relations and the local political field*, I argue that these are marked by *the dominance of network politics*. State-society relations mainly take the form of negotiated exchanges of resources between political representatives and local inhabitants, both in public and private arenas, and across societal fields. Local politicians provide needed material resources in return for political support and symbolic recognition. Concurrent with the hopes related to the *Alternance*, is distrust in politicians tied to the long-time political crisis. The picture of politics as a dirty business is fuelled by experiences of unfulfilled promises and the internal competition among and within political parties, where the struggle for economic resources and political power stops at nothing. Local state-society relations seem to be characterised by changing continuities and the paradoxical coincidence of hopes of, and new discourses on, political change, and the continued reproduction of political practices that characterise the politics that they wish to change.

The next part of the analysis, on the local religious field, contains two chapters. Chapter 8, on *religious associations in Colobane*, examines the collective organisation and mobilisation in the local religious field, which is a central part of Senegalese everyday life. In addition to religious functions, religious associations have vital socio-economic and political roles. The socialising between members offers the opportunity to build social relationships and networks that may be activated in a difficult situation. Religious followers may benefit both from the mutual help and solidarity among members as well as the institutionalised support practices of associations. In addition, relations with a marabout or religious hierarchy can secure needed

favours and goods. Religious associations also have political functions and implications, both at local and national levels. They form arenas of political mobilisation, used by local politicians to initiate patron-client relations or to recruit leaders into their party. At an aggregated level, the organisation of religious followers may form significant pressure groups, as explained in chapter 4.

Chapter 9, on *the struggle for symbolic power and generational changes in local mosques*, relates to the imams and the management of mosques. I argue that there is a certain habitual recognition of the authority of imams and the notables of local mosques, which serve as important arenas for the reciprocal assimilation of local elites. Some imams attain extended authority when they take on more than religious tasks and engage in the management of their mosques, particularly where this has been a long-established practice. The notables and elders who have run the local mosques now find their previous automatic legitimacy threatened by a change of generation among them. Their authority may now be questioned by the younger generation, particularly in instances of mismanagement. A generational shift has taken place in the management of some local mosques through silent and intricate power battles in situations where legitimisation crises have provided opportunities for younger forces. Co-management has been conflictual, as the young have launched new ideas and practices in managerial, distributional and religious issues.

The third and last part of the analysis of the local political space and practices concentrates on the associational life of the neighbourhood. Chapter 10, *'Mbolo moy dole' (Together we are strong)*, analyses *women's associations and savings groups in Colobane*. These serve social and economic purposes, both for their members and their leaders, as they form crucial arenas and networks of sociability, saving and mutual help. This provides them with informal financial and social security functions. While individual interest is prominent, the logic of collectivity must be respected for the system to function properly. All members must meet their obligations to secure the savings and assistance functions, as well as personal profit. Leaders are often female entrepreneurs of great capacity, who are granted symbolic power and recognition through their leadership. It has made local politicians court them and co-opt them into their parties. While this at times has provided desired economic resources, it may also involve a challenge to leaders who risk being affected by the general crisis of legitimacy of party politics.

In chapter 11, I explore *the struggles of neighbourhood associations*. Here, sports, youth and development associations arrange social events, perform important social work, engage in awareness raising and organise educational activities. Their stated goal is to develop Colobane and work for the benefit of its inhabitants. As the internal generation of funds merely secures the regular activities and operation of the associations, they are dependent upon external funding. Access to resources is linked to political contacts; the clientelism of political parties may secure economic support, but only in exchange for political support and symbolic recognition. However, the rejection of politics is evident also in local associational life, as a new discourse promotes the necessity of autonomy from the political field and of partnerships with NGOs. The battle for funding and political engagement seems to contribute to a fragmentation of local associational life. It fuels the competition among neighbourhood associations and hinders collaboration that could help realise the goal of local development.

Finally, chapter 12, on *the changing continuities of network politics*, presents the main findings and conclusions of the dissertation as a whole. I argue that local politics in Colobane is characterised by multi-activity in network politics, where personal relationships and social networks in various fields and arenas generate access to both symbolic and material resources. Despite the striking continuities in established social and political practices, there are considerable discursive changes and some altered practices in the local political space. This means that the neighbourhood is marked by changing continuities across social fields, as multifaceted expressions towards democratic practices and politics merge with established and negotiated, often clientelist, relations and arrangements in the politics of everyday life. This has been visible in the parallel yet intersecting stories of the different chapters of this dissertation, and also demonstrates how local politics in Colobane is closely linked to national-level established political practices and processes of change in Senegal.



## **2. Ethnography and fieldwork in Colobane**

In this chapter I reflect on the process and circumstances of doing ethnography, particularly related to the fieldwork I conducted in the neighbourhood of Colobane in Dakar, Senegal. In human geography, the focus has mainly been on the products rather than the processes of field research (Cloke, Cook, Crang, Goodwin, Painter and Philo 2004, Limb and Dwyer 2001) and on writing rather than doing ethnographies (Crang and Cook 2007). I will try to open this 'black box' of fieldwork through accounting for the research process of this study and concentrating on the ethnographic fieldwork. Thus, I aspire to account for the exploratory, relatively open and flexible process of ethnographic research, which I considered suitable to gain knowledge of local political practices and the possibilities of mobilisation in the local political space. In this chapter, due to my aim of reflexivity, I will account for my links to Senegal and the experiences forming the background of interest and knowledge for this project. I try to situate my research also by explaining my positionality in the field and its implications for the choice of setting for the fieldwork and the questions of access, and how positions as well as knowledge is co-produced and negotiated in exchanges with participants. This involves accounting for my use of participant observation and interviews, the writing of field notes and analytical notes, as well as the power relations that are negotiated in and structure the interpersonal production of knowledge. I try to make visible how data is produced by accounting for and explaining what I did, in collaboration with whom and why, under the circumstances. I aim thus to relate to the issues and questions of positionality, politics and ethics of the process of ethnographic research.

### **Introduction to Senegal, Dakar and Colobane**

I was introduced to Senegal by my cousin and her then husband, who is Senegalese. During the spring of 1993 they spent some months in Dakar with his family. I was lucky to be accepted as a guest in the family's house in the Colobane neighbourhood. Travelling to Senegal, it was my first time outside Europe and the US. I remember the encounter with a warm and busy airport where people approached me in a language I did not know, followed by all the new images, scents and people I met during the first evening in Dakar, as in a haze. I had a great time in the short month I stayed there, with a lot of experiences, new people to

meet and ways to learn, thanks to the hospitality of the family who included me in their daily life and social network.

Hanging out around the house with family members and the many friends dropping by, I experienced and learned a lot through observing and participating in the routines and events of everyday life. I was also helped by attentive family members who gave me implicit directions and explicit explanations. My French was rather limited at the time and I did not speak or understand Wolof, which is the everyday language in the house and much of Dakar. This meant that we relied on non-verbal communication and simple conversations in French and the few words of Wolof I picked up. This was of course possible due to the patience and kindness of others taking the time and making the effort necessary. I also talked a lot to the few family members and friends who spoke a little English, as well as communicated with and through my cousin and her husband.

As a newcomer in this setting, I had many things to learn, like the tacit knowledge related to the practice of sharing a bowl of food with others. As an inexperienced co-eater, I was helped and guided. Rules were illustrated or explained, like what was my area of the bowl to which I should restrict my eating, how to approach the joint food in the middle of the bowl, how to sit, how to eat and so on. However, without practice and the technique required, I fumbled a bit and was often helped by the women in charge who divided off good pieces of meat, fish or vegetables and placed them on my area of the bowl. I also learned a lot about other related social arrangements through observing the practices and rules related to the meal, like who was in charge of the meal, who should be seated together, which group got the best bowl, who were served or took the best pieces and the inclusion of people in the meal. This illustration can be transferred to many different practices and experiences during this stay, particularly with the family and their friends in Colobane. Thanks to them, I had a fantastic visit, I always felt welcome, included and cared for, and this made me comfortable in a situation where I constantly experienced and grasped new things.

During this vacational stay in Dakar and Colobane, I engaged in practices and activities which later became essential for my academic work in the neighbourhood. However, at the time I did not reflect on how I learnt and attempted to understand through participation, observation, listening and asking questions, in much the same way as when conducting ethnographic fieldwork. My practices and inquiries were my instinctive reactions to this new environment. I

tried to cope and manoeuvre in an unfamiliar setting and wished to respect the family, their culture and ways of doing and acting. It was my way of making sense of my experiences and being able to act and relate to people in a meaningful way. As explained above, it was indeed interrelational learning as I was dependent upon and much helped by the family and their friends, who directly and indirectly guided, showed and clarified how things were done. I also posed my cousin and her husband many questions in Norwegian to grasp how things worked and to manage my position and behaviour to show appropriate respect.

The experience of living with the family in Colobane and the short visit to Senegal provided me with some knowledge of family life and society. It also stirred my curiosity and started a process of reflection about practices, social arrangements, attitudes and norms. I did not at the time know how it would form an essential background for my studies and research. After this visit, I continued French classes in Norway and France. Through other studies, I developed an interest in interpersonal relations and social interaction, as well as issues of political and development geography, such as the connections between religion and politics. Developing my relations with my cousin and her husband and family, and living with them for some months, further increased my interest in Senegal and contact with the family in Colobane. I was involved in familial relations and thus maintained a connection to them. I had and sent news through my cousin and her husband, and spent time with two family members when they were visiting from Senegal.

The combination of experiences, studies and interests led me to focus on the role of Islam in Senegalese state-society relations for my MPhil thesis (Selboe 2001). My first research activity in Senegal took place in 1999 and 2000, when I did five months of fieldwork for the project. During part of this stay I lived with my family in Colobane, including my cousin, her husband and their two daughters who resided in Senegal at the time. When moving to another location with some family members, I visited the extended family and the neighbourhood on a regular and almost daily basis. Throughout this period I got to know the family better, and again I was warmly welcomed and accepted. Particularly *Yaay* (mother in Wolof) Lika, but also the other family members, made me feel an included family member. During this fieldwork, my knowledge of the neighbourhood, Senegalese/ Dakar society and familial and interpersonal relations deepened. This increased insight was both due to the collection of material and the interviews conducted and to my non-professional personal experiences and reflections, like those described in relation to my first visit to Senegal.

However, prior to and during the stay and fieldwork for my Masters thesis, I reflected more on my prior and current experiences of Senegalese society and familial relations. This was of course caused by my personal and professional interest and the analytical relevance to my studies. On the other hand it was still related to manoeuvring my behaviour and interpersonal relations in my daily life in the neighbourhood and with the family, although it was a more conscious reflexivity this time. As my French had improved and I had learnt some basic Wolof to be able to greet family, friends and neighbours, it was also easier to engage in simple exchanges in everyday life, and to move around the city and interact with people. It also made me feel more accepted as an insider belonging in the family, and able to act and move more freely and natural in the neighbourhood and city. However, I was of course still an outsider. All this formed an important background and supportive knowledge to the information I gained from interviews, documents collected and secondary literature.

In between the collection of data for my Masters thesis and the development of the PhD project and the subsequent fieldwork, I kept in touch with the family in Senegal on a regular basis both through my cousin, who now lived in Dakar, and by way of occasional phone calls, e-mailing with some family members and via sending greetings, cards and gifts.

## **Researching local political practices through ethnographic fieldwork**

The process of developing this PhD project and its ethnographic research design started with my interest in Senegalese society and people's contextualised practices. The focus on local political practices in Dakar was a result of my prior experiences of everyday life and the national political change that was happening during my fieldwork in 2000, coupled with my analytic and theoretical interest in local individual and collective mobilisation. In addition, I wanted to explore and understand the possible changes and continuities of local political practices and spaces, and their connections to national politics, including the socio-economic and political crisis in Senegal. This was the background for the development of the research question and the underlying question, accounted for in the introduction, which I sought to answer through ethnographic fieldwork in a neighbourhood in Dakar.

Ethnographic field research involves studying people's actions and accounts in everyday contexts, often with the researcher participating in the daily lives of people for an extended period of time. Although particular emphasis is given to first-hand engagement and participatory methods like participant observation, these are often complemented with the conducting of interviews, collection of documents or possibly video/photographic work. Thus, the ethnographer may use all possible sources to facilitate an in-depth study and to gain thorough understanding not only of the experiences and practices of people, but also their worldviews and ways of life (Cloke et al. 2004, Crang and Cook 2007, Hammersley and Atkinson 2007, Limb and Dwyer 2001).

Ethnography is closely associated with traditional anthropological fieldwork. Although comparatively less common in human geography, with only a small share of publications based on this methodology (Cloke et al. 2004), ethnography is not unknown to the discipline. Ethnographic approaches can be found in the nineteenth-century tradition of publishing travellers' and explorers' accounts, which is a part of the history of geography related to European imperialism. Later, the humanistic geographers of the 1970s drew on anthropological and sociological traditions in their use of ethnography. Since then, it has been relatively unusual until the cultural turn within human geography in the 1990s, when a new interest in ethnography was concurrent with the rapid growth in the use of qualitative methodology (Cloke et al. 2004, Crang and Cook 2007).

This new ethnography goes beyond the idealist critique of using the methods of the natural sciences to the study of social 'objects' in positivism, due to the distinct character of human subjects (Smith 1998). The importance of ideas and the human mind in organising experience was highlighted, along with the role of people's reflections, interpretations, intentions and values in forming behaviour and making the social world. In humanistic geography and social science, this was reflected in the focus on human experience and agency and in the aim of understanding and respecting the people studied through using their concepts and accounts in the description of taken-for-granted and everyday life worlds (Cloke et al. 2004, Cloke, Sadler and Philo 1991, Graham 2005, Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). However, the new post-structural ethnographies (Cloke et al. 2004) also involve acknowledging the 'humanity' of social researchers, that they are part of the social world they study, and consequently the subjectivity, values, intentions and power relations inherent in social research (Hammersley

and Atkinson 2007, Smith 1998). Thus, ethnographies do not represent social reality in a straightforward way; they are not facts but political re-presentations which are part of scientific discourse. This entails recognising the institutional, historical, geographical and social setting of research and how it affects the pre-understandings, interests and interpretations of the researcher, along with her personal characteristics, gender and class. The work process and texts of ethnographers are influenced and framed by all these factors, as well as the negotiations and practices of the interpersonal knowledge production in the specific societal field. Thus, ethnographies contain interpretations and presuppositions of both the researcher and the participants, and their various positions in different settings (Cloke et al. 2004, Crang and Cook 2007, Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). These new ethnographies thus involve a strong focus on reflexivity: in relation to the situatedness and positionality of the researcher, the power relations of historic situations and the social and interpersonal relations on which the ethnographies are based and thus the extended and complex field and process of ethnographic research (Cloke et al. 2004, Hammersley and Atkinson 2007).

I judged ethnography as a good approach for the project and such field research as vital to answer the research questions and obtain an insight into the issues of interests. Thus, I engaged in ethnographic fieldwork in the neighbourhood of Colobane in Dakar for six months over two time-periods; two months in late autumn 2002 and four months in spring 2003. Collecting data in the field, I engaged in observation of and participation in routine activities and particular events in daily life. I watched what happened, listened to what was said and asked questions both in casual conversations and in more or less formalised unstructured and semi-structured interviews. I also gathered relevant documents and followed national news through daily reading of newspapers. The experiences, problems and reflections related to this field research is accounted for and discussed below.

### ***The choice of Colobane as the setting for research and fieldwork***

Among the central questions of ethnographic fieldwork is the choice of setting. It demands careful consideration and the possible opportunities and the practicalities of fieldwork must be taken into account; like if the research issues are open to investigation in that setting and if the researcher can negotiate access (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). When leaving for Dakar, I had started the process of deciding the locality for the fieldwork. Since my first visit to Colobane, I had been interested in the neighbourhood and definitely saw it as a possibility.

However, I had decided to remain open-minded and use time to orient myself, seek alternatives and debate the choice of setting. I felt the need to discuss the issue with people who knew Dakar and its various neighbourhoods; like social scientists, family and friends. Thus, the first weeks of the period of fieldwork in 2002 were used to choose which neighbourhood to work in.

To make this decision I had to evaluate a number of issues. Before considering Colobane<sup>3</sup> as a possible setting, it was vital for me to confer with some family members to make sure that they did not dislike or object to me initiating a project in the neighbourhood where most of the family live. In addition, I considered alternative localities in discussion with social scientists in Dakar, as well as friends and family. Options were launched and promises made of contact through their intermediation with gatekeepers they indicated or assured would help me and be vital for opening doors. These seemed interesting choices at first. However, reflecting upon it, I was worried that the initiation of the project through a single person in a locality would affect the project and fieldwork in disadvantageous ways. Firstly, it could lead to a too narrow recruitment of informants through the contacts and social networks of the one person securing my access. Secondly, as the contacts and gatekeepers indicated were mainly well-known party politicians or other local authorities, I also worried that an affiliation to party politics or a local 'strongman' could impede the access to data. I feared that the inhabitants would be reluctant to talk to me if they saw me as too closely linked to a certain political authority and hence possibly part of a local political power-play. Thus, the reflections about my positionality and the inability to at least partly assess the variety of influences on my position and an eventual fieldwork in these localities worried me.

Although I was and am completely aware that all social research is always laden with power relations and my choices, actions and contacts and choices always affect the course and results of my research, I judged this dependency upon only one strong and politically active person in an unknown locality as inferior to the alternative of working in Colobane. Of course, my family affiliation would affect my work and position in the neighbourhood, but I considered the benefits to be greater than the eventual disadvantages. When making this choice, the earlier periods of residence and regular visits to the neighbourhood were essential. I judged them as providing a crucial background for conducting fieldwork and giving vital

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<sup>3</sup> The neighbourhood of Colobane is presented in more detail in chapter 5.

knowledge for achieving insight and understanding. Compared to the other alternatives, I felt that by working in Colobane I had a greater prospect of broadening my starting-points for building networks of contacts through multiple sources. It provided me the opportunity to make contacts through various family members and acquaintances. In addition, as a member of a family residing in the neighbourhood, I had a legitimate and natural reason to be present and a bond to the locality that made me partly belong there. Thus, I did not have the same need to depend on a single gatekeeper to negotiate initial access, defend my presence or to participate in and observe everyday life or particular events.

Indeed, after deciding on Colobane as the setting for fieldwork, a particular family member functioned as an intermediary when I searched for research assistance, particularly related to the interpretation of interviews in Wolof. He put me in contact with a youth association in the neighbourhood, as they had resourceful and educated young people working for them who could have the interest, capacity and time to help me. After presenting my project, needs and requests, the association singled out two persons. One was a young woman who lived outside Colobane but spent a lot of time in the neighbourhood. She is fluent in English and could thus interpret from Wolof to English. Unfortunately, I only worked with her in the early phases of the fieldwork, as she moved away. The other is a young man from the neighbourhood whose family had lived there since its establishment. He has intimate knowledge of Colobane and its inhabitants, and could draw on his relatively wide social network. He became the main research assistant and translated from Wolof to French.

In addition to family members and acquaintances, the research assistants functioned as door openers and valuable informants. They were also very useful for developing a deeper insight and understanding through our regular discussions and the concrete follow-up work done after interviews. In addition, the dynamic environment related to this youth association also contributed to my comprehension as I listened to and participated in the almost daily debates on small and big issues in everyday life or national politics. The building and courtyard of their offices was a space for and meeting ground of many youths of the neighbourhood and the members of the association. Through the generosity of the association, I and the research assistants could use one of the offices to hold interviews with interviewees who did not want to be interviewed in their home or workplace. These offices were also used to prepare before interviews, to discuss and write up interview notes when returning after an interview and to plan the coming work of the project.



After finding the needed interpretation assistance, I started my work. This period between initiation of a project and being in the middle of it might be a bit frustrating and difficult to account for. It is one of the times when one really lives and experiences the exploratory and demanding nature of ethnographic research. I started to orient myself through working and staying in the neighbourhood, talking to people and having conversations with the research assistants, family members and acquaintances. It was a rather messy period, where I tried to sort out and map the various key-persons and institutions of the neighbourhood, and thus relate to the part of the research question regarding the local political space. During this period, central politicians, associations, groups, organisations and authorities and their roles in relation to the inhabitants of the neighbourhood were pointed out. I also started interviewing key informants, like traditional and religious authorities, politicians, representatives of the commune d'arrondissement and leaders of various associations in Colobane.

### ***Working in the field: participation, observation and conversations/ interviews***

As mentioned, the ethnographic fieldwork in Colobane involved a range of different methods; participant observation, interviews and the collection of documents. The importance of observation and participation in daily life has been explained and exemplified above.

The conversations taking place during observation or participation are both different from and similar to those of planned interviews. It can be hard to distinguish between them, there seems to be no clear boundaries, but a continuum, such as that of participation and observation. I experienced some interviews to be accidental, spontaneous or of a very informal nature, while engaging in 'natural' conversations also meant asking questions and acting much like during planned interviews. Similarly, the information acquired from observing the context of an interview is much like the one gained from more 'natural' settings of participant observation. When conducting an interview in someone's house or office, I definitely gained additional understanding from observing the routines, practices and people appearing in that context. The introductory small talk and the chat or discussions often taking place at the end of an interview, and certainly the situations where I was invited to eat or drink tea with the interviewee or his or her family after the interview, provided me with important information. In these situations, we often talked about various issues of interest in a more informal manner. It touched and equalled the information and understanding derived from participant

observation and discussions and conversations with family, friends and acquaintances. The point is that both interviews and participation give possibilities for observation and involve engaging in conversation to obtain insider accounts (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007) from the setting one is studying.

Conversations taking place in a 'natural' setting where the researcher observes or participates and in the more formal situation of an interview are both conversations with a purpose (Cloke et al. 2004). I felt that both these variations of exchanges contributed to insight into people's practices and experiences, and the meanings they attributed to these and their related feelings. However, this depended upon the various informants and the atmosphere of the encounter. The issue of context and the power-laden nature of interview encounters (Valentine 2005) is discussed below, along with the negotiation of access, position and identity of the researcher in the relation and exchange with informants.

Ethnography and the conversations mentioned above involve the construction of meaning and production of knowledge through interpersonal relations and exchanges. This means acknowledging both the researcher and participants as active subjects mediating and negotiating the relation, one's position and identity, which will shape interaction and what is said (Valentine 2005). Engaging in such research demands an active, reflexive and flexible researcher (Cloke et al. 2004).

### **The importance of flexibility and reflexivity**

Asking questions in conversations and through interviews in ethnographic research requires flexibility and reflexivity of the researcher. During fieldwork, in conversations of participant observation or interviewing, I tried to be open, flexible and reflexive to gain as much insight and knowledge as possible. This meant that my goal was to be adaptable and to make the dialogue flow easily. Although I aimed for the interviewees to talk freely, I did pose questions and bring up themes relevant for my research if they were not touched upon. These questions were not direct, but aimed to activate the interviewee to talk about issues of concern for my project. I thus tried to engage in a form of open interviewing, although a list of relevant issues was normally thought out and prepared before the interview. I did not pose the same questions to each interviewee. My success in reaching my aim was dependent upon my capabilities in the actual meeting, as well as the participant. If the interviewees did not elaborate much, it was necessary to use the theme or question guide more often and also sometimes pose direct

questions. Such a flexible and open approach, which is often used in ethnographic fieldwork, requires the researcher to be an active listener (Cloke et al. 2004, Hammersley and Atkinson 2007, Valentine 2005). Thus, I tried to draw on background knowledge and prior experiences and pay close attention. This meant not only trying to perceive what was said, but also to read between the lines and try to understand what was not said and why. Simultaneously, it was vital to keep in mind how this information related to the research focus and questions to decide how to continue the interview. I also had to be alert and reflexive to know when to seek clarifications so as to catch new unexpected but relevant information or perspectives. This spontaneity and volatility of conversations was a strength in relation to accessing information, but also felt quite demanding at times. It was challenging to follow the accounts of the interviewee, hold the focus, encourage him or her to elaborate, make sure to use positive body language and verbal expressions to make the participants talk and feel valued; to contribute to a good atmosphere and to generate knowledge, particularly when I ideally should also be reflective and improvisational.

### **Selecting informants**

The informants were selected in various ways during the fieldwork. Its exploratory nature involved a broad outset, where both those I aimed to talk to and those I encountered more accidentally throughout the fieldwork became vital participants of the study. As explained above, I first set out to interview key-persons; leaders and representatives of the many institutions of the neighbourhood. This involved approaching local politicians and authorities of the commune, local mosques and associations. Later, members and representatives of the neighbourhood relating to and using these institutions and authorities of the local political, religious and social fields were approached. Thus, I targeted people who possessed desired knowledge through their experiences or position. However, I also gained valuable information from individuals who became participants of the study in a more unplanned manner. Through my participation and observation through acting and moving in Colobane alone, in the company of interpreters and with my family, the people I met or talked to also became my informants. Some selected themselves through initiating an exchange, others when I formulated my interest or they heard of my project. Some became participants after being selected by others, like when I was recommended to contact and talk to various persons directly, or they offered to act as intermediaries to see if they were interested in talking to me. This was often the case in planned interviews, when I informed of my study and what people I wanted to talk to; then interviewees impulsively advised me to see particular individuals or

gave names of relevant informants when asked. This snowball sampling (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007, Valentine 2005) was thus one way I recruited participants. However, this selection of informants, as well as those more unplanned accounted for above, were informed about my idea and definition of who I needed to talk to. Yet, being open to new circumstances and possibilities of other informants also informed and developed this idea and generated new insights and knowledge. As mentioned above, as an important factor when choosing the setting and securing of access, social networks, personal contacts and intermediaries also played an important role in obtaining information.

While some conversations or interviews took place only with me and the participant/ interviewee present, many also occurred in the company of others or with a group of persons. In some interviews this was due to the presence of the interpreter; who thus also had an influence on the production of knowledge. In addition, as most rooms, houses and offices in Colobane are filled with people, it was a consequence of the setting of exchanges. The only place where I could assure privacy and a quiet conversation was in one of the offices of the association. When talking to people in their homes, there was little room for retreat. Often a lot of family members were present, either actively listening to our conversation or engaging in other activities like watching TV, listening to music, preparing food, talking to friends etc. When making appointments with members or management staff of local associations, I experienced on several occasions that there turned out to be a few persons or a group of people joining in on the interview. Such spontaneous group interviews made it harder for me to structure and follow the conversation, but there were also advantages gained through group dynamics. During such conversations I often got more and in-depth knowledge, like through heated discussions, participants playing off against each other or when I learned of and about discord within a group and various individuals' roles and responsibilities.

The locality of the conversations varied, depending on whether they were held while participating and observing or in planned interviews. But the context of the interviews also differed. I tried to leave it up to the interviewee to decide where to meet; most often it was in their home or workplace, sometimes they preferred the office of the youth association in which the interpreters worked. This also depended upon whether the interviews were unplanned or arranged in advance. Actually, it was very hard to make appointments long beforehand. It turned out to be more productive to contact people directly at the moment when I wanted an interview. They either agreed there and then, or we scheduled a time later the

same day or evening, or the next day. The research assistant was of great help in approaching, recruiting and making appointments with interviewees. Some were difficult to get hold of and more easily contacted late at night, others needed to be called at particular times. It was necessary to adjust the method of recruitment and the time and setting of the conversation for the accessibility, wishes and possibilities of the informants.

I did not tape record any of the interviews. One of the reasons for this choice was recommendations and the experiences from my fieldwork in Dakar for my MPhil. thesis, where I was urged by social scientists and others not to record interviews. I also experienced people to be reluctant to answer certain questions or touch upon particular issues when the conversation was recorded. This was even the case with a professor, who was accustomed to make statements in the media and through publications. When initiating the work in Colobane for this project I brought up the issue again, and discussed it with various individuals; social researchers, inhabitants of the neighbourhood and an experienced journalist. They all seemed to hold that the recording of conversations would make people uncomfortable as well as make them talk less freely, hold back relevant information or be more prone to give politically correct and 'expected' answers and information. Thus, as it is vital to respect that people do not want the conversations or their comments to be taped (Valentine 2005), and due to the effects it could have on the knowledge produced, I decided not to tape the interviews. Instead, I opted for taking notes during the interview and made additional supplementary comments, observations and clarifications as soon as possible after the conversations. In addition, I tried to write out the interviews and the additional notes and my reflections upon them on my computer as soon as possible. This decision meant that I have missed out on the advantages of recording, such as the opportunity of getting verbatim quotes (Cloke et al. 2004). The lack of such quotes, along with my use of participant observation and field notes and the need for anonymity of the participants, has had consequences for the representation of information and conversations in this thesis. I have not been able to use direct quotes to illustrate the accounts and views of the informants or my arguments and analytical points.

### **Language and interpretation**

As mentioned above, interviews were conducted both in French and Wolof. Senegal has six national languages, of which Wolof is the most widespread. Wolof has developed as the lingua franca of Senegal, and is particularly prominent in urban settings like Dakar (Cruise O'Brien 1998, 2008, McLaughlin 2001). French serves as the written and administrative

language used by the state administration and educational system. When possible, I conducted the interviews in French, mostly without a research assistant. The interviews that had to be conducted in Wolof made the assistance of an interpreter inevitable. As mentioned above, the interpreters not only served this function, but also became valuable research assistants and informants, as we discussed the interviews after conducting them and other vital aspects and issues of my work. Their help contributed to solve some misconceptions and to increase my insight. However, to feel more comfortable in initiating conversations and to be more capable of following the accounts given in Wolof, I took a short introductory course in Wolof to expand the modest vocabulary and comprehension I already had. This was valuable, as it made it easier to follow the story of the interviewee and to clear up with or control the interpreter if he/she had not interpreted a word or passage I knew. Sometimes, interviews were held in a mixture of Wolof and French. For instance, I could pose a question in French, the interviewee started to answer in French but felt more comfortable switching to Wolof when talking about particular issues or giving certain explanations. The interpreters were involved in the project from the beginning, and we had a constant exchange of information about issues, themes, developments and new ideas. In addition to the initial introduction to the project and my aims for the fieldwork, we talked through the issues of informing the participants and securing them confidentiality and anonymity. Before interviews we often prepared by discussing relevant issues and sometimes working out questions or lists of themes that I wanted to touch upon during a conversation. We often also sat down after the interviews to go through our notes, discuss and clear up eventual misunderstandings.

The assistance and presence of an interpreter will influence the behaviour and response of informants (Valentine 2005). They will have an effect on the social interaction and the inherent power relations and negotiations. As the main interpreter was an inhabitant of the neighbourhood, his contacts, familial relations and social networks became part of the research setting through his participation and assistance. This may have caused some problems, for instance, making informants worry more about confidentiality, even if this was explicitly assured and explained. As part of a family and belonging to a local association, this positioning will have informed the study. However, I think the presence of the interpreters may also had a positive effect. It made it possible for interviewees to express themselves in their first language, knowing that there was someone who knew the neighbourhood, city and society, and who would understand them properly and explain what they meant. As already mentioned, the assistance of the interpreters was indispensable for my work, knowledge and

understanding not only due to the interpretation, also because we engaged in discussion and they provided information and gave explanations. I also learned a lot from becoming close to them; learning about their personal lives when we became friends. Although this duality of personal friendship and a professional working relation was beneficial, it also constituted challenges for the implicit negotiation of power relations as our roles were not as clear as in the start-up phase of the fieldwork. I experienced in some situations that the interpreter did not do the work we had agreed upon, in relation to interpretation and the posing of questions.

The issue of language is also relevant for the use of secondary literature for this project. Although it has been possible for me to read, understand and evaluate relevant academic literature in French, my preference for English has led to the greater use of secondary literature in English, as this has been less time consuming and more accessible. However, due to the accessibility of relevant literature in French in Dakar, I have still read and used much French literature as background information and actively in the thesis.

## **Learning strategies, positionality and social networks**

This section of the chapter deals with my strategies of learning during the fieldwork, and the negotiations over and use of various positions and identities in exchanges with participants and interviewees. The importance of social networks in developing field relations and accessing participants is also highlighted.

Ethnographic fieldwork and obtaining access to data through all the methods I used involves negotiations (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). As indicated above, my personal reflections on gaining access to a field and my position within it was decisive for my choice of Colobane as the setting for fieldwork. However, negotiations are not only related to the initiation of work and entrance in the field, it is part of every interpersonal exchange and thus a continuous and more and less conscious part of all social interaction and research. As mentioned above, the construction of knowledge in ethnographic fieldwork is interpersonal. Thus, both the participant and the researcher have an effect on the relation between them and the resulting production of information. For the researcher it is vital to reflect on and be prepared for this mutual negotiation, and how her characteristics, capabilities, self-presentation and

interpersonal resources and strategies affect the possibilities for fruitful interaction when engaging in the field.

### **Negotiating my position**

During fieldwork in Colobane I had a complex position or role, transgressing the conventional divide between insider and outsider. My positionality was defined from characteristics like age, gender, race and nationality, among other things. As a non-Senegalese *toubab* (white person) I was definitely an outsider. Still, as part of a family living in Colobane and previously visiting and living there, I had certain knowledge and belonging, and thus a partial insider-position. I actively used and managed these various roles, in addition to being conscious about my self-presentation. I strategically played out various dimensions of distance and closeness in different situations.

My composite positionality created a tension between being a stranger and insider, and made it possible to consciously juggle the many different identities and varieties of positioning in the search for knowledge. Depending on the reactions of and interactions with interviewees and other participants, it was possible to go in and out of various roles. As a foreign student, I was an outsider who was there to ask questions and explore various issues. In interviews, I experienced people generally to take great care to give me background information before answering my questions. I used this positioning as a novice to pose questions, watch what was happening and get people to explain it thoroughly. It also gave room for making mistakes, as incompetence is acceptable and partly expected. Particularly in the start of some interviews I played on the identity as an unknowledgeable student, not revealing my existing knowledge, to get accounts and explanations of various practices, events or relations that were as detailed as possible. However, by showing insight and understanding, sometimes later in the same interview, I got more and deeper information. When I was curious about things not mentioned during our exchange, I actively used my existing knowledge and awareness to signal aspects of belonging, understanding and sameness to get access to information or make people reveal sensitive or not yet considered issues. Although some were surprised, it seemed as if this understanding was valued, and it was more natural and possible for them to elaborate.

The juggling of identities and the negotiation of access and position is also related to the self-presentation of the researcher and the possibilities for impression management (Hammersley



and Atkinson 2007, Valentine 2005). Just as I during my first visit to Colobane I was preoccupied with showing respect for the family and the people I related to, it was even more critical for me to try to adjust to the setting and respect the people who shared their time and experiences when I engaged in research. I had experienced that it also contributed to a good impression and therefore hoped that it would improve my possibilities for fruitful interaction and access to information. Therefore, I tried to regulate my conduct and personal appearance to show respect and attain a good ambiance for interpersonal exchanges and conversations. Even though and because I as a white person could never blend in, I tried to regulate my dress and behaviour to show consideration for local ways and to signal sameness, or at least effort. One way of doing this was to actively use the little Wolof I knew to greet people and start conversations. Management of non-verbal acts were also of importance. For instance, I regulated my dress and made sure not to use clothes that were too tight, open or revealing. When doing interviews I most often wore long skirts or pants and a loose top, and if I knew I would talk to people who were highly religious or authoritative elders, I usually wore long sleeves, too. The one time I had an appointment within the centre of the religious movement Al-Fallah in Colobane, I used a shawl to cover my hair. This was commented upon; I was told it was not necessary but a nice gesture. I also received positive comments when wearing clothes of Senegalese-style fabric or styles. Particularly people I knew commented that I looked good; like a (real) woman or a Senegalese, implicitly expressing that it was a positive thing, particularly when I was an outsider who made an effort despite not being requested to dress in a particular way. Attempting to adjust meant showing respect.

However, your behaviour must be sensitive to the person with whom you interact. My aim was to be flexible and able to adjust in each context or encounter, but it was also something I learned through experience. The practice of shaking hands, for example, when introduced to someone was to me natural, respectful and almost automatic when starting my work. However, after some experiences where I misread the situation, holding an outstretched hand in the air without someone grabbing it, I became more conscious about this. Although I knew that some men, who defined themselves as highly religious, were reluctant to shake a woman's hands, I had not yet experienced it at the time. After this experience, I tried to be more attentive in such situations, particularly when the context could indicate this practice. I let it be up to the person I met to start the act of greeting through a handshake.

## **The importance of social networks**

I have already mentioned how staying with my family and having previously made friends and acquaintances made it easier to engage in ethnographic field research. It eased the start up of the project, made it natural for me to be in the setting and rather uncomplicated to gain access. This social network provided many contacts and thus a wider starting point for recruiting interviewees and meeting participants. It also made people more prone to vouch for me and the project and to function as intermediaries. My belonging to a family in the neighbourhood and my social network contributed to the mostly positive welcome and meetings with informants and made my participation and observation more accepted. The importance of social networks (Cloke et al. 2004, Hammersley and Atkinson 2007), and in my situation, that of my family, friends and research assistants was vital during fieldwork.

On several occasions interviewees claimed that they were originally sceptical about talking to me and that if the mediator had not vouched for me and said that I could be trusted, they would not have agreed to an interview. These mediators were most often prior informants or one of the research assistants who knew me and the project, as well as my affiliation to Colobane. The importance of belonging, social networks and of familial relations for access to information became particularly evident during an interview with an elderly man engaged in the management of one of the local mosques. He seemed sceptical even though he agreed to talk to us. During the conversation he did not elaborate much on the various issues launched, and I had to pose rather direct questions, which were only shortly answered. He became annoyed when I asked a question related to the construction of the mosque and eventual relations to the leadership of a major brotherhood. Due to his irritation and uneasiness, we decided to stop the exchange. However, when terminating the interview and thanking him for his time, there was as always some small talk. His attitude changed sharply when he understood that the interpreter was from one of the original families in Colobane which he knew very well and it was explained that I partly belonged to the neighbourhood through my family who is also among its original families. He animatedly said that we should have told him in advance, and that it would have made a big difference to our conversation.

Not only were social networks decisive when engaging in ethnographic fieldwork, they were also part of what I wanted to explore. Thus, the importance of personal relationships and social networks that was indicated by academic literature and studies, and my previous work, was confirmed through the fieldwork in Colobane. They constituted a resource to obtain

information and manoeuvre in the social system in the neighbourhood; they became means in the knowledge production. However, they were also the ends of the study, as one of the topics I wanted to explore was the logics and politics of social relations and networks in Colobane. Through participation, observation, interviews and conversations I explored various social relationships and their interrelations in the many networks of the neighbourhood. I learnt of their city, national and international links, and their inherent negotiations and power relations.

### **Unequal power relations**

The unequal power relations between researchers and their research subjects is the focus of much literature on qualitative methodologies (Cloke et al. 2004, Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). The researcher is most often portrayed as the strongest in this relation, and there are recommendations about reflecting on and relating to the history and issues of imperialism when doing research in an unfamiliar culture and Third-World setting. It is often argued that the researcher is the one in control of this relation due to the power of categorisation and representation of her work. Still, the production or construction of knowledge is not merely subjective; it is based on the negotiations and exchanges between the researcher and her informants.

This mutuality and the negotiation and changing nature of positions and power were definitely experienced during my fieldwork. It is not always so that the interviewer is the most powerful (Valentine 2005), it is dependent upon the characteristics, position and authority of the person you talk to and the context you are in. This changed between various situations and different interpersonal relations and encounters, as well as the situation, locality and theme, and it was expressed and negotiated in various ways. I experienced that my position as a student, thus having a high level of education and knowledge, was admired and valued. At the same time, I was not an adult with power, as I was neither a mother nor held a well-paid job or position that could grant authority. In addition, as I was there to explore their practices and experiences, I was definitely not an expert. Most people were positive, willing to help me and share their experiences and accounts. Only a few seemed a bit reluctant or timid. In an interview with a young school girl, her insecurity and respect made the interview not very fruitful. When participants or informants expressed hesitation or lack of confidence, I tried to encourage them through expressing how their accounts, views and experiences were of great value to me, although simultaneously emphasising how their participation was voluntary.

However, in other situations, the power-balance was the other way around. Elites holding a good position within a field or other powerful persons were more prone to demonstrate their position of power through the conversation. Some were a bit reluctant to share intricate information, and used techniques to manoeuvre the exchange like postponing meetings, asking us to come back later, evading answering questions or handing out documents to show their power, only to give it away at the next meeting.

There can be misunderstandings in the exchange that lead to suspicion, consciousness and malpractice or negotiated roles. Once, when interviewing an elderly merchant in the market, the conversation was very slow, he did not speak freely and I had to pose direct questions to which I got short and relative non-informative answers. When finishing off the interview through the interpreter, engaging in more informal conversation, thanking him for the interview and asking if he had any questions, it turned out that he had not properly understood that I was a student gathering information for my thesis. Due to the fact that I was a *toubab* not fluent in Wolof, he thought I was somehow related to the authorities, despite the information provided by the interpreter at the beginning of the interview. When he realised I was only a student, his so far closed face burst into a big smile, and he prayed for me and my educational success, wishing me luck with my research and thesis. This illustrates the need for not only providing adequate information to informants and interviewees, but also making sure that they do understand what they agree to, without being forced in any way.

### **Informed consent, confidentiality and other ethical questions**

The ideal of informed consent may be difficult to comply with in all situations. It was easier prior to more formal conversations and interviews, where I alone or through the interpreter informed the interviewee of the project, the aim of the interview, and that the interviewee would be anonymous, and explained that it was possible to refuse to join in or to answer particular questions. However, when engaging in participant observation, like in natural and spontaneous conversations, this is more difficult. Even if most people to whom I related were aware of my reasons for being and working in the neighbourhood, some of these situations were more intimate and just as much related to the fact that I was part of a family in the neighbourhood engaging in everyday exchanges and actions. This ambiguous role probably created rather blurred boundaries, as much participation was related also to everyday sociability.

I have however tried to make sure that I could guarantee the confidentiality of the participants or informants. As mentioned, when initiating a more formalised interview-situation, I always informed the interviewees that they were and would remain anonymous in any presentation and their confidentiality would be secured. Even if some claimed that they had no need to be anonymous, I still decided to conceal their names and secure them confidentiality.

There are other ethical questions to reflect and act upon when conducting ethnographic fieldwork. One is the mutuality or reciprocity of the relations with the participants (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007, Valentine 2005). As you expect the informants to be honest and tell you everything about their lives and experiences, should you not do the same? When in the field, I always had to decide how much self-disclosure I thought was necessary or appropriate. Just as in daily life and personal interaction outside research, how much information one reveals about oneself is dependent upon the nature of the relation and the context in which a conversation takes place. This also goes for how much of your personal beliefs or political views etc. you present in exchanges. Sometimes it is vital also for a researcher to play down personal beliefs, out of tact or courtesy and particularly not to harm the interaction and exchange resulting in knowledge. Also for me, when conducting fieldwork, this was something I both reflected upon and instinctively related to. When talking to people I did not know very well I never went into discussions if I felt their attitudes or political views challenged mine. However, in conversations with people I knew better, like family members, friends, the research assistants and some of the youths at the association where most of the interviews were conducted, this was natural to me. Here, the disagreement or discussions were not harmful to the relations, but a part of the way our relationship grew, and I thus also gained understanding.

I was not comfortable, however, about lying to obtain information or engage in exchanges that could secure interesting data. I most probably gave fuzzy or short answers to questions I felt awkward talking about. Once, my truthfulness led to the loss of an interview, but the situation also provided important information. The interpreter and I had showed up at the complex of the Al-Fallah in Colobane for a scheduled interview with a leader on the national level of the movement. We were introduced through an intermediary from the management of a local section of the movement in the neighbourhood. The leader made a religious speech and asked me questions to test my religious knowledge. Finally, he asked me directly if I was

a believer. When he learned I was not a Muslim, he declined to participate in the interview, arguing that they had experienced earlier misunderstandings and ‘false, critical writing’ from non-believing researchers in the past.

During fieldwork I was also faced with corruption and the importance of monetary compensation for performing certain tasks. At times, particularly dealing with people engaged in the Senegalese state or official bodies, I have been presented with the possibility of paying smaller or larger ‘fees’ to access material, speed up processes, to see people or make contacts. Even before starting the fieldwork, I had decided that I would not engage in such activities, although they are an everyday phenomenon in people’s practices (especially in relations with the state, bureaucracy and other official institutions (Blundo 2007)). Particularly when trying to access data from a key national state agency, I received direct offers and covert allusions to pay to get data and to circumvent the often slow and uncooperative routines and practices of these institutions. I however did refuse these offers.

Engaging in fieldwork, researchers may experience big material differences and meet expectancies of expert services or financial help (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). In a situation where one is richer in material assets and engaging in relations to people and associations, the logic of mutuality of the conversation and relation may raise the question of giving something back to or remunerating participants. I did not experience any direct requests for money, but during some interviews and conversations, there were implicit enquiries about the possibility of my helping the association or the neighbourhood. Particularly associational leaders or members wanted to know if I had relations to Norwegian or international NGOs, or in other ways could help secure resources. I also encountered polite inquiries about my network and future possibilities for becoming related to or mediating potential sponsors after finishing my studies, like through work or aid projects. They implicitly reminded me how they now helped me and were in my network of contacts, in the negotiations of our exchange. In addition, I understood that the fact that I was a young female student and belonging to a family in the area affected the above mentioned situations. Several people I knew rather well expressed that my obligations were first and foremost to my family in the neighbourhood. They claimed that my status as a female student may have reduced eventual direct requests for money.

I always made sure not to mislead informants by making promises or by talking in very

positive ways about potential financial support as a strategy to initiate relations and access information. However, I did feel the inequality of them helping me and sharing much, and that I should do something in return. I thus tried to help and give something back by spreading relevant information to which I gained access. This was mostly related to rights, regulations and possibilities in the system of the commune d'arrondissement, where there seemed to be a general lack of information. This was particularly related to informing about possibilities for associations or groups to apply for funding for particular types of projects and activities that could benefit the neighbourhood.

### **The rewarding and demanding process of ethnographic fieldwork**

During ethnographic fieldwork, such as that I conducted in Colobane, some people or participants become very close to you. Through my work and familial relations I related to certain people as 'whole persons', as I was included in their daily lives, experiences and family relations. This made it easier to understand the context, such as their circumstances of life, needs and wishes, and to relate to their poverty or marginality. One example is the close relations that developed between the interpreters and me; we did not just have a professional relationship, our lives became closer as we discussed, learned to know each other and became friends. This involved being included in their private sphere and learning about their families, aspirations for work and the future in general, as well as being part of the discussions of the events and reflections of everyday life. Such mutuality and deep knowledge through close relations in fieldwork was important for in-depth knowledge and understanding. However, this of course varied, while some exchanges and relations were deep, others were short and shallow.

Although ethnographic fieldwork and qualitative methods have the potential to provide in-depth knowledge and rich understanding, fieldwork is demanding. The researcher must remain open and flexible to take the opportunities presented to access information and deepen understanding when and if they arise. As mentioned above, the negotiation of access and positions, and their strategic use and deployment in fieldwork may also be demanding. To handle various interpersonal relations in a context with which one is not familiar and in languages in which one is not fluent or knowledgeable at all was also a challenge. Particularly during the first period of fieldwork for the PhD project, this took a lot of energy, just as described for the first visit to Colobane.

I remember finding it difficult juggling all these ideals or demands. It was stressful to constantly be active in social interaction, both for social and pragmatic reasons and for research interest and strategies. While trying to adjust to and respect the everyday life, attitudes, customs and norms and obligations of the neighbourhood, I should also improve my Wolof, be able to greet people and preferably remember the names of all the persons I met. This both involved being a human being in this setting, belonging to a family there, and simultaneously relating to my research and work in the neighbourhood. I needed to collect relevant material for the study, prepare for the next day of observation, interviews or meetings as well as write up observational and interview notes and reflect upon the activities of the day, continually trying to optimise my possibility of acquiring information and trying to remain open, flexible, reflexive and responsive. At times, I found the manoeuvring of day to day collection of information and relations with various people tiring. In these periods, it was hard enough to work with and reflect upon the information gathered that day, writing up interviews on the computer, writing field notes and preparing for the next day. During such phases, there was not enough energy to think strategically upon the project as a whole.

I look back on my fieldwork experiences and relations as giving and stressful, intense and interesting. The messy and demanding nature of ethnographic fieldwork made it vital for me to have some time alone for reflection, processing the experiences of the day and writing up field notes as well as interviews on my computer, and, if possible, reflect on the research issues and questions and plan ahead. This was part of the reason for my choice to live outside the neighbourhood; to get some distance and time, space and quiet for the work of writing and processing data and experiences. I knew that if I lived in Colobane the whole twenty-four hours, there would be less time for this, as well as physical and social space. In Colobane I experienced the setting as 'filled' and a wish to continuously engage and participate in everything, say yes to every possibility; hand myself over to the people and activities of the neighbourhood, friends and family. Even if this was tempting and a wish, I knew it would leave little room and time for the needed quiet reflection, reading and writing. Living outside Colobane, going back to my accommodation every evening, if an interview or particular event was not scheduled, gave me room to relax and be free from the opportunities and constant evaluation and negotiations at night.



### ***Continued analysis and making sense of the material after fieldwork***

So far this chapter has focused on the process of ethnographic fieldwork and its inherent and continuous analysis. I have demonstrated how it has been part of my engagement in conversations, observation and participation, as well as the overall work in the field. As a consequence, interpretation is already integrated in the textual material I produced during fieldwork, such as interview-, observational- and field notes, my field diary and the writing out of these notes and additional analytical reflections. However, the process of analysis and interpretation continues for the rest of the research process, like when working to make sense of the material and writing up the dissertation.

Managing and further analysing fieldwork data is demanding work. I started this process by attempting to gain an overview. I read through the textual material produced in the field; my observational and field notes, the interviews, my field diary, analytical notes and memos on theoretical reflections. In addition, I examined the documents provided by various associations and the local commune in Colobane. I also looked into the literature and publications acquired in Dakar. This initial examination of texts gave me a general idea of the dimensions and content of the material, and helped revive the memory and context of the texts I produced and the experiences I had during fieldwork.

This was only the first step of a long process of re-reading the texts several times and engaging in a more in-depth study of the data. This included making notes and trying to create connections between and within the texts to attain a certain structure to what seemed a rather chaotic and overwhelming mass of material. There are many different words used about this process; sifting, sorting or coding of data (Cloke et al. 2004, Crang 2005, Crang and Cook 2007, Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). In this process of making sense of and analysing the textual material I used annotating as a way of categorising. I both made rather random notes and engaged in more deliberate ways of classification. I employed composite categories, for example, related to persons (who said/did what) and themes (what they talk about/do). These theme-centred and person-centred approaches of analysis (Thagaard 2003) meant sorting the material in relation to either groups of people, for example, the members and leaders of religious associations in Colobane, or particular themes, such as various informants' accounts of local politics. These constituted complementary lines of exploration used along with those related to particular events or broader categories like the religious and political fields. The use

of such various categories and approaches for investigating and reconfiguring the material was aimed at discovering new ways of seeing the data and answering the research question, as well as finding ideas for structuring the final written product.

This process of analysis of the data after fieldwork, through reading or recontextualising the material in these different ways, is not straightforward or delimited. It is an open, non-linear process, which amounted to a repeated and rather fine-grained analysis of the texts which also took place through writing. Indeed, my practice and process of writing, such as sketching up the plans or elements of chapters and writing them out, involved a constant move between the material and the preliminary text. It constituted yet another way of making sense of the data, as I presented and framed it in different ways in various chapters of the thesis. This way of working with the rich material obtained through fieldwork has made it a lengthy and continuous process of analysis and interpretation. It has however been possible to keep the complexity of the material in the foreground during large sections of the research process, although this can be a mixed blessing. It makes it harder to control or administer the material, but has provided me with a flexible process of analysis open to change and new interpretations, and hopefully thus a deeper understanding.

As mentioned above, my reading, analysis, note taking and writing during the course of the research were of both concrete and more abstract analytical nature. This was the case when working and writing in the field, just as it has characterised the continued and later analysis of data through categorisation and writing. As my experiences or the empirical material has been the starting point, my way of working may be labelled inductive (Cloke et al. 2004).

However, the interpretation and analysis inherent in the research process has not been separated from theoretical approaches (Crang 2005). My analytical and theoretical interests formed the research project and question, and thus the choice of ethnographic methodology. It has also informed the writing of notes and other texts during fieldwork, as well as being present in the development of categories and concepts.

I have explained how both the empirical data and ideas of analytical or theoretical nature helped me to understand and sort the textual material and connect various parts of it. The categorisation was informed by the practices, accounts and concepts of the participants in the field, together with my own constructions formed by a combination of and influences from both the empirical field material and theoretical input. I tried to order and reduce the

complexity of the empirical material through systematic work and a process of conceptualisation which involves abstraction (Sayer 1992). This involves isolating one or more aspects of the material or a particular object or subject present in it, by removing it from its whole and context. However, such abstract conceptualisation must be related back to the complexity of the concrete phenomena of interest (Cloke et al. 1991, Danermark 1997, Sayer 1992). Thus, my work of interpretation, writing and analysis, and the whole research process related to this project, has involved a dialogue and continuous move from abstract to concrete, from simplicity to complexity, from part to whole, as parts of hermeneutic circles.

## **Situated knowledges, reflexivity and accounting for the research process**

In this chapter I have accounted for the research process of this project, with particular attention to the ethnographic fieldwork that was conducted in Colobane, Dakar. I have demonstrated how I used an ethnographic methodology to answer the research question, through methods like participant observation, interviews and document analysis. I have tried to critically evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the research process; when developing the project, in the field and through the continued analysis and the writing after fieldwork. I have shown how I have arrived at my conclusions through sharing the procedures used and decisions made throughout the research process. They may be traced in the ‘paper trail’ (Crang and Cook 2007) of the research; in the mass of writing of field notes, analytical memos, notes on the categorisation of the material, drafts of analytical writing and earlier versions of the chapters in this thesis. It has been my aim to present this process of knowledge production in an open way, so that it may be scrutinised and assessed by the reader. I hope that the account of the development of data throughout the research process and my reflections on the context of the collection of data, such as the relations to informants, will enable the reader to trust the way they are produced, analysed and represented.

Using an ethnographic methodology I have combined a variation of methods, sources and perspectives to explore, understand and gain in-depth knowledge of the research question and issues. This may also contribute to the reflexivity and strength of the research, data and final product; this dissertation. The drawing on different methods, perspectives or sources is called

triangulation and constitutes ways to enhance the reflexivity and ensure the quality of field research results, in addition to obtaining deep understanding and extensive knowledge (Bailey 2007, Danermark 1997, Hammersley and Atkinson 2007, Valentine 2001). Doing ethnographies means collecting data material through various sources of information, like when I had the possibility of combining my own view, that of the participants and their practices. As explained above, I also contrasted the accounts and practices of various participants. For instance, when aiming to understand the practices and logics of a local youth association, I talked to insiders in different situations; leaders and members, and sought the view of the association from outside; through the accounts of leaders and members of 'competing' organisations and of people who were not part of an organised group. However, the existence of differing views did not mean that there is something 'wrong' with the data or my understanding. It simply reflects the complexity of the social world and the local setting. Indeed, the exploration of such dissimilar views, accounts and practices made me gain additional knowledge and insight. As shown in this chapter, the participant's knowledge is both a resource and a topic in ethnographic work (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). It has not only provided me with information on social events, people's practices and experiences, but has also been analysed in relation to the discursive strategies of the participants, the perceptions reflected in their accounts and the power relations and social dynamics of the context.

Such various analytical strategies were accounted for particularly in the section on the analysis of the textual material after leaving the field, and reflected in the different ways of categorisation used to recontextualise and understand the material. However, these various approaches of investigation were also part of the practices and writings of fieldwork and in the whole process of writing this thesis; they have been part of both doing and writing ethnographies. During the research process, which has been marked by the reflexivity of using various methods, sources, and perspectives, as well accounting for my position, the negotiations and power relations in the field. It has also involved reflecting upon, being critical of and testing my own interpretations and understanding. I tried to secure feedback, both when in the field and later during the research process (Bailey 2007, Crang and Cook 2007, Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). During fieldwork, I made sure to do this in the course of the conversations with participants and interviewees and via discussions with informants, family and friends in Colobane. I tried to challenge my conceptions and to be open for new information and alternative views and interpretations. This was more formalised in the

meetings with social scientists in Dakar and the regular discussions with the research assistants. It became part of the routine when going through an interview or the day's work.

After leaving the field, I have also tested and adjusted my interpretation and analysis through continued contact with family, the interpreter and friends through regular e-mailing and phone calls. In the final stages of analysis and writing I had the opportunity of spending a whole day with the main interpreter to talk about my project, and to discuss and make clarifications. In addition, I have had a sort of 'peer review' through discussing my work with colleagues who have also commented on textual material I have written. The comments on a few of the chapters of the thesis by someone with thorough knowledge of the practices and social dynamics of Colobane has also been valuable.

Although these practices of the research process designed to secure in-depth knowledge also may help a possible corroboration of the data obtained, they are not to be used to check if I am finding the 'truth'. This is counter to the inherent assumptions and subjectivity of qualitative research (Bailey 2007, Thagaard 2003). As mentioned earlier, all social research has a social and institutional setting and is influenced by the positioning of the researcher. The historic and geographic context specificity of research has also been stressed (Crang and Cook 2007). Thus, there is no possibility for a general or objective truth; only that of contextual, personalised and situated knowledges.

Although generalisation is not a goal or even relevant to such situated and contextualised research, it is argued that there may be a certain transferability and application beyond the setting, situation or participant studied. This depends on the reader and the use of theory, however; whether elements, concepts or processes that may have significance beyond the setting of study are identified (Bailey 2007, Crang and Cook 2007). Such transferability necessarily must involve a recontextualisation; a theoretical and abstract analytical/ conceptual understanding in a new context or frame of reference (Thagaard 2003). This is contrary to those arguing that the partiality and positionality of qualitative and ethnographic research and knowledge leads to a crisis of representation. Others claim that such relativism is not necessary, and that social phenomena may be represented and ethnographers make reliable accounts of the social world, even though partial (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007, Haraway 1996).

Such a partial perspective has been referred to as situated knowledges by Haraway (1996), and makes reflexivity vital (Cloke et al. 2004, Flowerdew and Martin 2005, Valentine 2005). Thus, ethnographers are encouraged to engage in critical reflection to recognise their own positions and perspectives in the production of knowledge and construction of meaning, as well as to account for their situatedness. This has been an aim throughout this chapter. However, it is argued that the situating of the researcher, through internal and external reflexivity, may never be complete. One of the reasons for this difficulty is the relational character of identity and research (Rose 1997). When accounting for the fieldwork, I have stressed its interpersonal character and described how exchanges and conversations have involved both deliberate and unconscious negotiations and presentations of positions and identities, both on my own behalf and that of the participants. Thus, the process of research, the participants and my own knowledges and identities were not fixed or linear, but practised and negotiated compromises which are pragmatic and in constant flux (Crang and Cook 2007). It has thus been vital for me, in the process of situating knowledge reflexively, not only to focus on my own background, characteristics and settings. I have also tried to give space to the participants, including the interpreters, as actors and show how their knowledges and agency have framed the field research (Haraway 1996, Rose 1997). I have aimed to demonstrate how doing ethnography is an intersubjective endeavour, where researcher and researched, although possibly unequally positioned, are interconnected and involved in the changing social relations under study and in the production of knowledge (Crang and Cook 2007, Limb and Dwyer 2001).

### **3. A conceptual framework for analysing network politics**

This chapter aims to provide a theoretical framework for the analysis of local political practices in the neighbourhood of Colobane, as it is situated within national politics in Senegal. The research questions, the empirical context and research material require a framework taking account of the dynamics and complexity of political practices and spaces, acknowledging their material and symbolic aspects, as well as discourses. This framework should reject static and predetermined relations between state and society and show the place of religion in such relations as constructed and variable. It will have to acknowledge the plural roles and flexibility of both institutions and social relationships, and be able to explore the politics of and creativity of people's practices across social fields and various arenas in public and private spheres.

The chapter is structured in three main parts discussing approaches to state-society relations, the politics of the postcolonial African state and social practices. First, the need to analyse state and society relationally and in local settings is highlighted by the state-in-society perspective and its emphasis of 'unpacking' the concepts of state, society and the junctions between them. Secondly, state-society relations are contextualised through a focus on postcolonial African politics and rendered more concrete by theories on neo-patrimonialism and particularly Bayart's perspective of the politics of the belly. He grasps both the material basis and symbolic nature of such relations, as well as the logics and practices of a network politics. Here, personal relationships and contacts, forming vital social networks, are central in actors' struggles and negotiations for access to resources. Thirdly, Bourdieu's theory of practice provides concepts with which it is possible to further explore the actors and logics of networks politics. The concepts of habitus, capital and fields provide tools to analyse the power relations and practices of actors in the Senegalese context in general, and the neighbourhood of Colobane in particular. In the fourth and last part of the chapter I argue that the insights of Bourdieu and Bayart should be combined for a broader conception of politics and for grasping the plurality of political spaces and practices. Bourdieu's concepts of social and symbolic capital, and his perception of social exchanges and the delegation of representation, are valuable when exploring how social relationships are important catalysts for political power and influence in the network politics of Bayart. This provides fruitful tools to analyse how both elite and more marginalised actors in Colobane and Senegal interact and engage in political practices across social fields as they struggle for both symbolic and

material resources.

## **State-society relations**

In this part of the chapter I will discuss ways of conceptualising, understanding and analysing state-society relations. Studying state-society relations is vital to the understanding of politics both at national and local levels in Senegal. The institutions and representatives of the local state are among those the inhabitants relate to and interact with in the local political space of Colobane, directly and through intermediaries. Likewise, to understand national politics in Senegal and the processes leading to a change of regime, which is the context for this study, one should explore the relations between state and society, and the role of religious leaders in mediating these.

There has been an increasing acknowledgement of the need to analyse state-society relations. This has involved a shift in attention from previous perspectives of the society-centred modernisation and dependency theories and of state-centred theories (see, for example, (Rueschemeyer, Evans and Skocpol 1985) which were all perceived as unable to accurately grasp the dynamics of politics or society (Stokke 1999). The state-in-society perspective (Migdal, Kohli and Shue 1994), which emphasises the need to understand state and society relationally, criticised the society-centred theories for reducing states and politics simply to being products of socio-economic conditions. The state-centred analyses were assessed to hold a limited and unbalanced view of the state as entirely autonomous, coherent and powerful; not recognising its social basis or vital social forces. In contrast, the state-in-society perspective focuses on the mutual relations between state and society, and the complexity and fluidity of these. It is argued that these relations and interactions take place in multiple arenas of society where both the state and social forces struggle for power, domination and change (Migdal 2001, Migdal et al. 1994). Although the analytical separation of state and society is recognised, emphasis is put on the actual and often blurred and moving boundaries between them and the potentially changing nature of their interactions. The state-in-society approach calls for concrete and contextual investigations exploring the many ways in which state and society are interrelated and stresses the necessity of conceptually breaking down states and societies and the junctions between them.



‘Unpacking’ the state means resituating it in its social setting and doing an ‘anthropology of the state’ to investigate its various levels and actors (Migdal 2001, Migdal et al. 1994). This will contribute to the awareness of the state apparatus as fragmented and manifold, and help grasp the various structural settings of its diverse parts and the connections and power balances between them. Migdal (2001, 2004) explains actual states as shaped not only by the actual practices of their many branches and representatives, but also by their image as a dominant, controlling and coherent actor (much as presented in state-centred theories). However, the image and the concrete practices may overlap or, more often, be conflicting. This highlights gaps between discourse, intentions and practices, and consequently draws attention to the multiplicity of logics informing the various state institutions and representatives. It may help to explain how they can operate in incoherent ways and help to explore their sometimes contradictory responses to pressures from within the state and other social forces (Migdal et al. 1994).

The contradiction between image and practices, intent and outcomes, rhetoric and action, which has been under-theorised and poorly understood in previous theories, is not limited to states. According to Migdal (2004), it is a characteristic of any social formation, be it a state, a family or an association. From this it follows that the analytical dismantling of society is just as vital as that of the state, if one is to grasp the many ways actors in the state and society interact (Migdal et al. 1994). Society is complex and constituted by social organisations such as the state, families, informal relations like patron-client networks, formal organisations like churches and political parties, as well as various community or nationally based organisations (Migdal 2001). The evolving and fluid nature of such social actors and forces must be acknowledged, just as that of social structures (Migdal et al. 1994). Thus, whilst the state is not a monolithic coherent actor, neither is society an autonomous or undifferentiated sphere. This is still a critical point to make in relation to contemporary social science, particularly with regard to some of the literature on civil society. Sjögren (2001) argues that there is a tendency to essentialise civil society and to portray it as a homogeneous sphere completely separate from both the state and the economy. In contrast, he promotes an understanding where the formal and everyday practices of various social actors within interrelated social, political and economic spheres must be explored through concrete research, much like in the state-in-society perspective. Also, the creative and sometimes contradictory plurality of social forces and the power relations between them must be acknowledged and investigated.

Likewise, the related inclination to romanticise civil society, local participation and NGOs within both liberal and radical camps, and as reflected in developmental policies, has been criticised for not recognising diversity, inequalities or power relations (Mercer 2002, Mohan and Stokke 2000, 2008). One example is the concept of social capital of Putnam (2000, 1993), referring to characteristics of social organisation like trust, norms and rules of reciprocity, organisations and networks that are seen to promote economic growth and political improvement, which has been used by the World Bank and other development agencies. It has however also been criticised precisely for underplaying notions of power and conflict, for bringing political culture back in and for ignoring the importance of politics and political organisations in and beyond particular localities (Harriss et al. 2004, Mohan and Stokke 2000, 2008, Sjögren 2001).

It is now commonly recognised, at least within political geography, that state and society are not autonomous or uniform spheres and that they should be comprehended and analysed relationally and through the many concrete contact points and encounters between them (Corbridge 2008, Mohan and Stokke 2008). There are still valuable insights to draw from the state-in-society perspective, however (Migdal et al. 1994), where the politics of the social world are portrayed as taking place through key struggles in a multitude of arenas and settings where different actors engage for domination, power or change. For instance, when the representatives of states and other social forces engage and battle over resources and power (Migdal et al. 1994). Some struggles are limited to smaller and local areas, while others may be regional or countrywide. In formal and informal spheres and various fields of society, different actors engage, negotiate and battle about politics, resources, social conduct and values, about state structures, identities, norms, symbols and personal relations. In the face of the limitations and advantages experienced in these vital battles, political actors join forces and collaborate, contest and oppose, in their attempts to reach their goals. They strive for the power to set the rules of these struggles, in order to obtain both material and symbolic power to influence people's lives and practices through affecting everyday social relations and perceptions (Migdal 2001, Migdal et al. 1994).

Through engaging in these struggles, actors can contribute to alterations (which might include alterations of themselves and their goals), as the cumulation of struggles and often their unintended consequences in the manifold arenas of society may create change. Thus, the

negotiated relations, actions and interaction of social forces, including the state, have transformative character and the potential to reshape both state and society (Migdal et al. 1994). How such social transformations are produced in detail is however not very well explained in the state-in-society perspective. It is just implied that structural changes related to the expansion of worldwide capitalism, the growth of cities and technological innovations create changing contextual conditions. Such new circumstances activate alteration processes when the existing distribution of resources and social relations are affected and trigger new struggles of adjustment and related conflicts and alternations (Migdal et al. 1994). However, as the state-in-society approach holds that the political action, influence or power of actors, both in the state and society, is contingent and depends on the specific and historic context, they call for concrete empirical research.

While the state-in-society perspective offers broad conceptual and theoretical tools to analyse the complexity and relationality of actors in state and society, it is useful to incorporate more contextualised notions of politics and state-society relations such as the ones found in theories on the politics of the postcolonial African state. The work of Bayart (1993) is of particular importance in this regard, especially for the argument and analysis of this thesis.

## **The politics of the postcolonial African state**

The African postcolonial state has received much attention in the social sciences, specifically in political science and in African and development studies. The central debates on the politics of the postcolonial African state have mainly focused on the state as an arena for the development of an elite class and on how the employees of the state engage in private appropriation of public goods. The latter has been the centre of theories on neo-patrimonialism, claiming that this constitutes a culture characterised by corruption and clientelism which leads to the inefficient African state. Bayart's (1993) approach to politics, state and society in Africa is developed in dialogue with and as a critique of certain elements of this approach. Also he sees the political space around the postcolonial state as the primary arena for African politics. However, while the first-mentioned approaches focus mainly on the elites related to the state, Bayart discusses the practices and strategies of both elite and more marginalised actors in numerous struggles for domination, resources and survival through a

political system of personal networks across social fields.

### ***The pursuit of hegemony among postcolonial elites***

Both the theories on African neo-patrimonialism and on the state class have focused on the elites of the postcolonial state. The class analyses portray the employees of the state and bureaucracy as a kind of bourgeoisie, and so treat the state as the basis of the dominating classes of postcolonial Africa (Randall and Theobald 1985). The elite of the state is seen to have achieved their prominent political, social and economic position through accessing various types of state resources. Furthermore, it is argued that this state class have upheld and increased their influence by working for a concentration of power in the executive branches of the state (Randall and Theobald 1985). This centralisation of power, particularly around the presidency, is related to the view of the state as the 'ultimate prize' and thereby the importance of access to its resources (van de Walle 2003). Bayart (1993) also highlights the material reasons for the centrality of the postcolonial state. For him, the elite appropriation and the political struggles related to the state are the result of how it, through time, has been an arena where political power and economic resources are concentrated.

Bayart (1993) takes a historical perspective on the genesis and dynamics of the postcolonial African state which involves exploring the contextual and differentiated practices of social actors, their procedures of accumulation and battles for domination. In contrast to the abovementioned class analyses, Bayart refuses to link the postcolonial state or its genesis to an existing dominant class or static class structure. The common notions of both class and ethnicity are rejected as the basis of the state, although ethnicity is recognised as a notable political factor and constructed identity is utilised as a political instrument, i.e., for mobilisation. Bayart (1993) instead presents a generative conception of the state where the historical process of the reciprocal assimilation of elites through concurrent alliance and competition is a consequence of what he calls the pursuit of hegemony. This involves a continuous struggle *for* class which is unpredictable. It may have the potential of being a process of a class in formation, but one that is incomplete, uncertain and reversible.

The starting point for the historicity and origin of the postcolonial state is thus the pursuit of hegemony related to the state and its resources (Bayart 1993). Although a wide range of actors take part in the related struggles, elite groups are particularly closely linked to the

pursuit of hegemony for historical reasons. In the transition to the postcolonial state, the African elites gained new opportunities to access state institutions and resources. During the colonial period, they had been involved through the indirect rule of the colonisers and retrieved the reserves of the state only through patrimonial support. According to Bayart (1993), the most common result of the pursuit of hegemony after independence has been a reciprocal assimilation of elites, which he holds to be the case also for Senegal. It involves the formation of an alliance between different regional, political, economic and cultural segments of the social elite. They compete and unite in a continuous process of negotiation about religious, social and political practices, and over symbolic and material resources. The basis for the integration of this heterogeneous but also relatively coherent elite is solely the pursuit of hegemony, as they aim for a prominent position in the political space around the postcolonial African state, where political power and accumulation are deeply intertwined.

The postcolonial state is the primary arena for the struggles for economic and political domination, and closeness to its resources enables actors and social groups to become wealthy and powerful, at local levels as well as regional and national scales. A position in the state and the salary of a job in the public service can be extremely important in a context of unemployment and a straitened economy. In addition, a political or administrative position may offer opportunities for additional income, and thus the possibility to build personal wealth and recognition. Bayart (1993) describes how such private accumulation is produced through influential contacts, easier access to credit, the possibility of demanding resources, assets and cooperation from others, as well as getting authorisations and dispensations in relation to imports and various rules and regulations in business. There is also a process of straddling; combining paid employment and the accumulation of state resources with private investment in agriculture, transport, property or other types of business, are central practices and strategies for personal enrichment (Bayart 1993). As state and private paths to accumulation are combined by the actors and groups at the top of the social pyramid, postcolonial politics are marked by unclear divisions between the public and the private and blurred boundaries between state and society.

### **Neo-patrimonialism**

The vague boundaries between the public and private and the accumulation linked to the state has been the focus also of theories on the neo-patrimonial African state. Neo-patrimonialism

may be defined as a hybrid phenomenon where patrimonial and legal-rational bureaucratic domination are mixed or partly interwoven (Erdmann and Engel 2007). Here, patrimonialism refers to a traditional system of domination where the relations between a ruler and the ruled are entirely personal and where there is no separation between private or public spheres (Médard 1991, 1993). In neo-patrimonialism, this separation is present and formally accepted. It is also part of the image and discourses of states (Migdal 2001), to which public reference is made. However, actual practices are informed by both the patrimonial and bureaucratic logic, which overlap in a way that makes informal politics a part of formal political institutions (Médard 1997).

Médard (1991, 1993) describes the neo-patrimonial bureaucracy as marked by the conflict between patrimonial and formal bureaucratic systems and a resulting privatisation of public affairs. As Bayart (1993), he depicts the postcolonial African state as the main vehicle to obtain power and wealth, and thus the most effective path to affluence is through the appropriation of state resources (Médard 1997). In a neo-patrimonial system, bureaucrats and political representatives alternate between their private political and economic interests and their public roles, and thus use their position also for personal accumulation of communal assets. There is a general lack of division between the economic, the political and the social, and thus the quest for wealth, power and prestige is governed by the same logic. Practices of clientelism and patron-client relations are characteristic means to gain political control through economic redistribution of public resources in the neo-patrimonial African state. This is related to the lack of political legitimacy of its political leaders, who need to redistribute resources to evade the crisis of legitimacy from becoming precarious (Médard 1997, 1998). Patrimonialism and the neo-patrimonial state are also seen to hold a culture of corruption that is systematic and extensive, along with predation, nepotism and presidentialism. It is all pictured to contribute to an inefficient bureaucracy, a dysfunctional state and economic crisis, as well as being incompatible with and hindering development and democracy (Erdmann and Engel 2007, Médard 1993, 1998, Randall and Theobald 1985).

The idea that democracy and neo-patrimonial practices are mutually exclusive is by now proved wrong. That the political practices associated with neo-patrimonialism have not prevented the introduction of democracy and still persist, is evident also in Senegal, where such (neo)-patrimonial systems and related practices have persisted, but accommodated to the context, from pre-colonial, through colonial, to postcolonial politics. This is evident in the

local political practices and discourses in the neighbourhood of Colobane, where democratic and established clientelist logics coexist and overlap. Beck (2008) argues that Senegal is marked by a clientelist democracy, and compares the brokering of patron-client relations between national patrons and citizen-voters by various local elites in various electoral districts. Her general argument is that the relationship between clientelism and democracy cannot be predicted, as it is complex and varied. It is an empirical question that requires concrete analyses of if and how clientelist relations hinder or promote competition and mobilisation, depending on whether it functions as a system of political subordination or can be used in the political strategies of clients for access, inclusion and accountability (Beck 2008).

Bayart (Bayart 1981, 1993, Bayart, Coulon and Fauré 1981) also criticises the impression created of undifferentiated and pathological African states trapped in a repetitive history of corruption and instability which makes them unable to develop or change. He argues that the immense variation of the continent is ignored in theories of neo-patrimonialism, promoting the image of one essential, dominant and exclusive African political culture, and that although they rightly portray politics as controlled from above, they fail to acknowledge the practices and politics from below of dominated actors. Bayart (1993) extends the neo-patrimonial perspective of an African political culture and fixed norms mainly marked by corruption when describing the logic of the postcolonial African politics as *the politics of the belly*. He sees corruption and the other practices described in theories on neo-patrimonialism as only one aspect of this political logic characterised by informal organising and practices in personal networks used by both elites and more dominated actors in society.

### ***The politics of the belly and the significance of social networks***

*The politics of the belly* describes the postcolonial African political logic and actors' battles for access to power, positions and resources in terms of access to food and eating (Bayart 1993). For many, it is fundamentally related to the problem of feeding oneself and one's family, as the severe material conditions put survival as the primary goal. Thus, the politics of the postcolonial state cannot be reduced to elite corruption and nepotism, like in the theories on neo-patrimonialism. Corruption represents only one aspect of the politics of the belly, which also encompasses critique and opposition to such practices. However, Bayart (1993) rightly also relates the expression, and the related struggles for wealth, accumulation and

hegemony, to the impression and reality that those who come to power intend to 'eat' and to the general appetite for power and wealth of the elite. Still, we are reminded that just as elite actors perform practices within the realms of corruption, the economy of survival sometimes makes it indispensable also for the less privileged to operate at or over the border of what is legal or considered moral to provide food, pay critical bills or to contribute at vital ceremonies and celebrations. The expression also refers to the aspect of corpulence and how a big belly signals wealth and ability to provide for oneself and one's dependants. Indeed, intrinsic to the politics of the belly is the idea that access to resources, for instance, through a position in the state structure, makes it a responsibility to share these and to distribute privileges to relatives, contacts and allies. This logic affects actors of various social groups; your personal contacts and network relations will help, support and protect you.

The importance of personal relations and networks in social, religious, economic and political fields are obvious for actors in all strata of society, whether the primary goal of their struggles are survival, access to resources or political domination. In these social networks diverse actors and groups battle, negotiate and exchange resources. It is precisely this interaction and the interdependence of actors and their practices that form the political system and logic of the politics of the belly (Bayart 1993). Thus, the struggles for survival, accumulation and power related to the postcolonial state constitute a larger and historic system of action, created and institutionalised by the political practices of actors in time and space. Hence, although social actors and their political strategies and practices are influenced by this social structure or political logic (forming particular possibilities and obstacles), they are also producing these very social structures through their interdependent actions. One of Bayart's (1993) main points is that this political system, marked by political and social network construction, is one that secures political participation and inclusion, but also (re)produces inequality.

The political network system promotes social and political integration as the politics of the belly encompasses a symbiosis of geographically and socially diverse actors and groups, and of different fields of society (Bayart 1993). There is a multiplicity of networks of economic, social, religious and political origins, which in addition to their original functions also serve as political channels. Actors from various levels of the social hierarchy straddle these various fields and networks in their interaction and struggles, according to their power and capabilities, just as they combine the private and the public spheres, politics and business, state and society. The result is a personalised network politics that belongs both to formal



politics and more informal spheres of African postcolonial society. Here, the political practices and strategies of elites, where political power provides access to resources, money and prestige, take place along with the parallel strategies and practices of marginalised groups and actors for survival and inclusion. The integration of social groups and individuals comes about through the personal contact and knowledge individuals have of each other, directly or through intermediaries, when they actively draw on their social relations as part of their political strategies. Thus, social contacts and networks are vital and continuously worked on to sustain or improve the already existing relations or to create new ones. It is through the network system, which is marked by both horizontal and vertical relations, that most of the population are politically active and affiliated with central political processes (Bayart 1993). Horizontal solidarity and relations are coupled with the unequal exchange of capital, goods and services along a vertical axis. This vertical contact ties individuals and groups of different social strata together as the mutual practices of the networks exceed, but do not remove, divisions of status, income and power.

Although Bayart (1993) focuses on the elites and their pursuit of hegemonic control of the state, he holds that politics is also produced 'from the bottom up', accentuating the role of dominated actors and groups. He refers to a large political activity at the grassroots, where actors simultaneously participate in and challenge the established political power. Local uprisings, engagement in the state, activities in the informal sector, strikes, evasion or popular demands and the expression of grievances; all these popular political practices directly and indirectly influence the state and the established political system. These are not portrayed as part of counter-hegemonic strategies, but as examples of the inconsistent nature of politics and actors' flexible and manifold 'ways of doing'. To Bayart (1993), the politics of the belly, and the politics of African postcolonial state and society, are products of the unpredictable social struggles and contradictory actions of interrelated actors.

Even if the politics of the belly and its political network system provide arenas for the interaction and integration of various social groups, they are still marked by and reinforce existing patterns of domination and inequality. Bayart (1993) outlines a historically based and highly stratified social system which is reproduced by political practices. This is particularly evident in the political and economic opportunities that are offered to the elite groups in the networks of the postcolonial state which make them able to gain power and accumulate wealth through the straddling of politics and business. They acquire prestige and their power

will be further accentuated if the imperative of distribution is respected and accessed resources are redistributed to family, friends and political allies in the form of gifts, jobs, contacts or money. The control over the state has also provided a way for these elites to keep their position by attracting and co-opting local and popular leaders that could support the cause of subordinated social groups, and thereby present a threat. They have been assimilated through being offered positions in the state or bureaucracy and provided with resources. Those who do not adjust or protest are met with opposition and threats (Bayart 1993).

Furthermore, the elites of the postcolonial African state have also actively tried to co-opt and regulate religious leaders and their activities. In Senegal, the marabouts, who are leaders of religious Sufi orders, are important and vital popular leaders who have become related to politics due to their potential to control a great proportion of the population and to offer an alternative model of society (Bayart 1993). The incorporation of religious leaders into the state has however been more challenging than co-opting political opponents. They have gained complex and ambiguous roles in relation to the elites of the state, seldom having a consistent or unilateral strategy of resistance or collaboration. Religious leaders and groups are sensitive to the strategies and attitudes of ordinary people, and the state never manages to completely control the religious field, despite vast material and symbolic investments (Bayart 1993). However, the religious elites, like marabouts, have often served as intermediaries between the state and the population.

### **The strength of Bayart's approach**

One of the strengths of Bayart's (1993) approach is how he illustrates the concrete practices, contacts and personal relations of individuals at various levels of the social hierarchy, both in the private sphere and the realms of the state. He demonstrates how the formal political field and other domains of society overlap as bases for the system of accumulation, the organisation of the interaction of social groups and the material and symbolic relations between individuals. When writing on the reciprocal assimilation of elites through the pursuit of hegemony, Bayart (1993) portrays how the elites of the networks related to the postcolonial state engage in a wide range of practices and mechanisms to promote unity among the groups that possess power and dominance. The party in power, with the administration and the bureaucracy, gather elites of different geographical and social backgrounds. However, Bayart also demonstrates how the private sphere and everyday life hold significant arenas for contact

and interaction between the segments of the elite, for instance, through visits at the workplace, socialising in restaurants or arrangements in the business world. Such practices and dynamics are not unique to the elites, they are shared by actors and groups of the lower strata. They engage in similar systems, which have connections to the elite segments of society. The common feature is that contact between individuals takes place through negotiations for and exchanges of various types of symbolic and material resources – all part of actors' struggles for accumulation and hegemony.

Thus, according to Bayart (1993), political actors at various levels of the social hierarchy use rather similar channels and procedures of contact. He highlights the importance of ceremonies like funerals, weddings or baptisms, as well as pilgrimages and other religious gatherings, and various celebrations of local, regional or national nature. Central also are the bonds knit through going the same schools or universities, and belonging to same associations, churches or Muslim brotherhoods (Bayart 1993). The actors of the lower social strata have been partly marginalised from the formal political sphere, and their strategies and practices mostly take place in daily life, through the mentioned family ceremonies and religious celebrations, as well as through socialising with family and friends, neighbourly visits, and village gatherings, and when someone calls in to see their relation working in the state structure. There is also a widespread use of intermediaries. In addition, information and rumours of the people in power are speedily spread through various networks through '*radio trottoir*' and '*radio couloir*', the radio of the sidewalk and the corridor, and through the media. Adherence to a political party, participation in a local association or a religious group provides the potential for vital connections. The agencies of requests and gifts, as well as the transfer of resources to family and clientele also make up part of the links between various actors and groups (Bayart 1993).

Bayart's (1993) approach hence has important strong points in relation to other theories on postcolonial African society. Although he depicts a stratified social structure and political systems that constitute different degrees of constraints and opportunities for various actors, his approach involves a contextual and practice-oriented analysis, where the strategies and relations of actors are seen as mutually influential and have transformative potential. In addition, he includes not only the political practices and social relations of elites, but also of dominated actors, in the logic of the politics of the belly and the related network system. There is much to learn from the illustrations of how concrete practices and networks of everyday politics connect state and society through mobilisation and activity both in public

and private spheres. His equal acknowledgement of not only the material but also the symbolic aspects of politics is also a vital asset, along with the concrete examples of such material and symbolic practices in formal as well as informal politics (Bayart 1993). The historic perspective on postcolonial states, societies and politics, highlighting their differences over space and time, entails the recognition of the need to contextualise African politics and consequently also a rejection of determinism. Instead, concrete empirical studies and contextualised analyses are called for.

Bayart (1993) manages to portray the diversity and inherent contradictions in the politics of the belly and its network politics. It forms a system that is simultaneously one of inclusion and participation on one side, and inequality and domination on the other. In the same way, patron-client relations are seen as effective vehicles for social integration, solidarity and redistribution, but also as producing and legalising inequality and elite exploitation. However, it is mainly the incorporation of social groups through the inclusion of dominated actors by the dominating elites and the negotiations between them that is highlighted. This is because the flexibility of the political network system is seen to provide possibilities of resistance from below, and so of transformation of the social stratification and political arrangements (Bayart 1993).

The theories on the postcolonial African state, and particularly Bayart's contribution (1993), have provided a contextualisation and concretisation of state-society relations. His view of political systems as incomplete, open and with a potential for mobility and change, makes his approach flexible and dynamic, and gives it more weight in relation to, for instance, the theories on neo-patrimonialism. On the other hand, one of the weaknesses of his approach is that the manner in which change may or does come about is not indicated, and analyses of concrete interrelated and transformative practices and relations are not provided. However, Bayart's approach and the concepts and analysis of the political network system and the politics of the belly still provide fruitful tools for the analysis of local political practices in Senegal. To understand and analyse actors' concrete practices and negotiations through network politics in the context of the neighbourhood in Colobane, it is useful to draw also on the theory of practice of Bourdieu.

## The politics of social practice

The state-in-society perspective (Migdal et al. 1994) aims for state-society relations to be concretised both by an analytical ‘unpacking’ of concepts and through concrete and contextual analyses. Theories on the politics of the postcolonial African state contribute to contextualising and showing the relational and complex nature of state-society relations. Particularly Bayart’s (1993) approach and his conceptions of the politics of the belly and a networks politics that play out in a range of different arenas and fields of society. However, by drawing on Bourdieu’s theory of practice it is possible to further unpack Senegalese state-society relations both at the national and local level, and contribute to the analysis of the material and symbolic practices and social relations of individual actors in the network politics of the neighbourhood of Colobane. The concepts of habitus, capital and field will provide tools for understanding actual everyday practices and negotiations for influence, participation and representation in and across various social fields, and for exploring the power relations between actors: *Fields* constitute different contexts for actors’ practices, *habitus* forms dispositions for practice that link actors and the context, and *capital* denotes the power and possibilities of actors due to their social position.

Similar to the two other main perspectives, Bourdieu focuses on the struggles of the social world. These are located in various social fields where actors compete over various types of power and means to enhance their position and to dominate, oppose or transform the fields and their logics. Like Bayart, Bourdieu portrays a stratified social structure when presenting social space as composed by the relations and distinctions between positions held by actors. To explain Bourdieu’s notions of social space and the genesis and logic of practices, it is necessary to give an account of the three interrelated concepts of habitus, fields and capital. It is their interplay which constitutes the basis for social practice (Bourdieu 1990b).

### *Habitus*

Bourdieu claims that social practices can neither be understood as products of social structures and mechanistic results of external causes, nor as a matter of individual consciousness and the outcome of the intentions and rationality of actors who aim to maximise profit. He argues that in objectivism the actor is lost, while in subjectivism the social structures governing practice are left out (Bourdieu 1999, Bourdieu and Wacquant

1995). Instead, the notion of *habitus* is introduced as a mediation between social structures and individual actors (Bourdieu 1977, 1990b). Habitus constitutes dispositions for practice as well as schemes for perception, classification and evaluation (Bourdieu 1998). Habitus is individual in the sense that it is embodied and internal to the person, acquired through socialisation and experiences. It forms tacit knowledge and a practical sense which generate actors' practices (Bourdieu 1990c, Bourdieu and Wacquant 1995). Habitus is also collective and shared, as it is a socially constituted system where individuals who are relatively close in social space tend to have similar dispositions for action and perception and thus observe each other and behave much in the same way. Habitus is relatively durable, as it forms objective structures and consensuses that merge with the subjective and internalised cognitive structures of individuals. While this the embodied, sub-conscious and unstated nature of habitus makes it stable, it is also exposed to change; as an open system and the product of history, future experiences will shape it (Bourdieu 1977, 1990c, 1998, Bourdieu and Wacquant 1995).

As the habitus is both the product of social conditions and the practices forming them, and the producer of strategies and practices in relation to these conditions of the social world, the habitus makes that world feel natural and self-evident to actors (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1995). The habitus constitutes a common sense that is not reflected upon, but which makes certain actions and ways of thinking more probable and natural. This established common sense regarding the social world is referred to as *doxa* by Bourdieu (1977). It is implicit and unformulated, and reflects how people most of the time take themselves, their perceptions and the social world they relate to for granted (Jenkins 2002). This shared dominant or orthodox vision of the world, however, reflects the point of view of dominant groups, although it presents itself as, and has the importance of, a more universal one. Thus, the natural and self-evident common sense is politically produced and has a certain legitimacy, as people (usually) do not question their immediate understandings and the established order of the social world (Bourdieu 1998).

Doxa belongs to the 'universe of the undiscussed'; it is adhered to without being explicitly questioned. However, at times, a field of opinion or 'universe of discourse' is formed when doxic truths are confronted with alternative discourses (Bourdieu 1977, Stokke and Selboe 2006). This contestation between orthodox and heterodox opinions expose the arbitrariness of the doxic or common sense social arrangements, such as power relations, the established social order and the construction of the social world. The result might be a break between

subjective and objective structures, a possible crisis of doxa, when such social ‘facts’ are questioned through dissenting discourses and thereby lose their character as natural and unformulated phenomena. Bourdieu (1977, 1998) argues that heterodox opinions are conditioned by crises, i.e., of a political or economic nature, and actors that bring the undiscussed into discussion through developing alternative discourses. In these struggles over the logics and classifications of the social world, and hence the construction of social reality, dominating actors and groups will use their symbolic and material power to reject the new definitions imposed by the dominated who have questioned and demonstrated the arbitrariness of doxic truths (Bourdieu 1977). It implies a power battle to define the common sense of the social world; to define the habitus that yields practices.

Although the habitus is acquired through experiences in a particular field, it is transferable also to other fields. Thus, it creates competent actors who are able to make sense of and act in the social world. This entails that they become able to ‘play the social game’; to engage in struggles to maximise the results of their available resources without intentional or conscious rationality or calculations, as they, through their habitus, generate reasonable and qualified practices and strategies (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1995). For the individual actor, the habitus is released and exposed in the meeting with the field. There is a close dialectical relation between habitus and various social fields; the habitus constitutes the field as something understandable and meaningful for actors, but the field also structures the habitus (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1995).

### ***Fields***

Bourdieu sees the social world as composed of a wide range of specific but synchronous fields, which represent the context of social practices, and inform them along with the embodied dispositions of the habitus. Fields are social spaces composed and structured by the power relations and distinctions between positions. The relative location of positions are determined by the volume and distribution of capital (power and resources) connected to them (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1995, Stokke and Selboe forthcoming). However, social fields are not lifeless structures, positions are occupied by actors and fields constitute the arenas of their struggles for material and symbolic resources (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1995).

The struggles for resources, power and influence are common for all fields, but each field has

its own particular characteristics and logic. Bourdieu uses the analogy of a game to explain the competitive structure of a field; they have players, strategies and stakes, which are the product of the competition between players. Also, the players possess the needed competence and dispositions (*habitus*) to know and recognise the laws and stakes of the game. This practical sense makes it possible for the players to have a feel for the game, or to adjust to the demands of the field (Bourdieu 1990b). The actors invest in the game through their engagement, which implies an implicit recognition of its importance (Bourdieu 1993, Bourdieu and Wacquant 1995). Both the actors who oppose the structure and logic of the field, working to change it or to improve their position, and those holding dominant positions and power they strive to conserve agree that the game is worth playing. These presupposed points of agreement about the game ‘go without saying’; they are related to the state of *doxa* (Bourdieu 1993).

Because fields are made up of the power relations between actors, some actors will cope with ease in the competitive struggles or games of a field, while others will experience difficulties. Those who hold dominant positions will possess a high volume of the capital that is vital in the particular field and so control essential practical knowledge that generates practices which makes the field work in a manner that is profitable for them (Bourdieu 1993, Bourdieu and Wacquant 1995). These powerful and dominant actors thus engage in conservative strategies to keep their positions and defend the orthodoxy, but are simultaneously sure to meet protest and opposition from the less fortunate actors. Those in inferior positions hold less capital or power and are more likely to meet obstacles in their struggles to reach their ambitions and make demands, but still participate in the struggles of the field and engage in subversive strategies by launching critical discourses. They may attempt to force the dominant actors out of the silent and misrecognised legitimacy of their positions, which again will engage these in defensive discourse and practices aimed at reinstating the tacit consent to *doxa*. There are continuously partial revolutions taking place in fields, but these seldom question the very logic of the field (Bourdieu 1993).

Those possessing a dominant position in one field are often powerful also in other fields. This is due to the fact that although fields may be relatively autonomous and hold specific logic, there are also certain similarities among them and they may be closely connected. As already mentioned, the struggles for the accumulation of material and symbolic resources and power are common for all fields. There is also a certain correspondence of practices and power



constellations across various fields. This is related to the habitus (dispositions of practice) of actors, which again is influenced by their relative position of power in social space: both of these are determined by their volume and composition of capital. Along with the habitus and the field, it is the volume and composition of capital that form the basis of social practices.

## *Capital*

The positions in a field, the distinctions between them, and the related habitus are based on the volume and distribution of capital. Thus, the objective structures of capital compose and structure the social world, affect the functioning and logics of fields, and form the basis for relations between actors. Capital, its effects and accumulation also inform the practices and strategies of actors. Capital equals power (Bugge 2002, Harriss et al. 2004, Stokke and Selboe forthcoming), and the asymmetrical distribution of capital thus constitutes different starting points for the actors holding positions and engaging in the struggles and games of the various fields of society. The unequal power relations entail uneven chances of success for actors, their strategies and practices; some will manoeuvre with ease and profit from their investment and engagement in social struggles, while others are more likely to meet obstacles and constraints (Bourdieu 1986).

Capital is also part of the subjective structures of individuals. It is the capital and practices of individuals holding various positions in social space that make up the social structures mentioned above. Personal capital may be embodied, much like the habitus, or come in a materialised form. Bourdieu (1986) sees capital as accumulated labour, as it is based on investment of time and social energy. He presents three regular forms of capital; *economic capital* (material assets like money or property), *cultural capital* (experience, knowledge or education) and *social capital* (social relations or networks of contacts that involve mutual recognition). In addition to these three basic types of capital comes *symbolic capital*, which entails that the other types of capital are recognised as legitimate and that the individual is thus granted prestige, honour or a position of legitimate authority. This is vital particularly in political and religious fields, where the field-specific types of capital, political and religious capital, involve precisely such symbolic recognition (Bourdieu 1986, 1990a).

The various forms of capital can be converted into each other (Bourdieu 1986). Educational credentials can lead to a lucrative job. A political position might give access to economic

resources. Some goods and services may be accessed through economic capital, while others are only accessible through social capital. The struggles around the conversions that can be made between the different forms of capital, and thus their value in different fields, are among the basic battles of the social world. The most powerful conversion possible is into symbolic capital, and entails that the different forms of capital are recognised as legitimate, or that the arbitrariness of capital is misrecognised as natural (Bourdieu 1986). This means that through the habitus the capital gains a symbolic character when it is unconsciously recognised, or misrecognised, due to the effects of the doxa.

Using terms like capital, investment and profit, Bourdieu (1986) applies an economic logic and terminology to practice. However, his concept of capital is much broader than that recognised by economic theories. He rejects a limited focus only on economic capital and the pure self-interest and maximization of profit intentionally pursued by simply economically motivated actors. On the contrary, he argues that to grasp the economy of practices, one must take into account all social practices and include also the non-economic forms of capital and exchanges of the social world. Although such practices seem disinterested, they are not; actors unconsciously strive for profit and the accumulation of capital in all forms and fields (Bourdieu 1986). However, for their practices and capital to be efficient, the logics of accumulation and reproduction of capital need to be disguised, both for the actors themselves, and for those they relate to. Bourdieu (1986) provides the example of gifts in social relationships, where the conversion of the economic capital to social capital presumes a certain labour, time, care and concern. In economic terms, the investment in personalising a gift to attain such a conversion is a wastage, but in terms of the logic of social exchanges, it is a solid investment that will secure the essential recognition that reproduces the social relation and probably also provide future and long term profit in either in symbolic or material form.

## **Network politics: the importance of social capital**

As demonstrated above, Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, field and capital help conceptualise the practices of actors and the power-relations between them (Harriss et al. 2004). They are therefore highly relevant for this thesis which involves the study of local political practices and the local political space of Colobane. These concepts also help to explore the logic of

different and overlapping social fields that hold the arenas of everyday politics and the multiplicity of practices, institutions, discourses and networks that make up the local political space. However, to understand actors' practices in the network politics of Colobane, and Senegal in general, it is vital to combine these concepts with the contextual insight from Bayart's (1993) perspective of the politics of the belly. To unpack the notion of network politics and the importance of social relations and symbolic recognition for political power, it is fruitful to further explore Bourdieu's concepts of political field and social capital, which is a critical asset for both elites and more marginalised actors in Colobane. These will help base the argument made in this thesis that social capital and the related symbolic recognition is important for symbolic representation, political power and influence.

### ***The importance of social capital for access to resources in network politics***

Social capital is 'the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to the possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition' (Bourdieu 1986: 248). Thus, it is not only the number of social relations an individual possesses that constitute her or his social capital. It is composed of all the capital, and thus power and resources, to which such a network of contacts may and does provide access. A person may thus strengthen her or his position, power and possibilities through nurturing social relationships or being member of a group.

The establishment and maintenance of social relationships that constitute social capital is, according to Bourdieu (1986), based on continuous material and symbolic exchanges. The mutual recognition and solidarity inherent in social relations and groups are not automatic, but involve a continuous labour of sociability. Hence it requires time and energy of social actors to accumulate and reproduce social capital, and to access the potential and associated material or symbolic profits. However, personal relations and social networks are mainly the products of the unconscious strategies of individuals to create or maintain social relationships that may be beneficial in the short or the long term. This tacit work to transform contingent relations into social relationships endowed with durable obligations and feelings like respect and appreciation requires a specific competence and disposition that may be attained and maintained as a central part of the actor's embodied social capital (Bourdieu 1986).

Social capital is governed by a logic that makes it always function as symbolic capital. To

Bourdieu (1986), the symbolic constitution of social relations, consecration, involves the conversion of social capital into symbolic capital. This happens through the mentioned exchanges of resources that produce the required mutual knowledge and acknowledgment, when they are turned into signs of recognition of the relationship and help reproduce it. Bourdieu (1986) points out a range of practices, arenas and occasions where social interaction and exchanges take place, and capital is acquired and reproduced. He mentions socialising in parties and ceremonies, as well as the importance of neighbourhoods, schools or clubs in building social relationships. This evokes and may be completed by Bayart's (1993) account of the manifold socio-political practices of African network politics, where both horizontal and vertical social relations are developed in private and public spheres across the many fields of postcolonial society.

According to Bourdieu (1986), the cost of investment in sociability is long term, as there is a time lag between the investment in sociability and the symbolic transformation of mutual recognition and obligations, and thus also the access to the potential additional profits of the symbolic and material exchanges involved. Such investments or practices are not necessarily calculated in the pursuit of gain and seldom consciously pursued; they are informed by the tacit logic of emotional investment that requires an involvement that is seen as necessary and disinterested. Indeed, Bourdieu (1986) holds that unconscious denial of interest and calculation is essential for the recognition and consecration of many social practices. An individual's embodied innocence regarding this disinterestedness shows competence and creates dispositions that generate practices which makes the actor manoeuvre with ease (Bourdieu 1986). Thus, even the practices of dominating actors to uphold their positions of power are infrequently explicit strategies of domination, but more often unconscious and related to a sincere disinterestedness that best serves their interests. The logic of practice and the symbolic constitution of social relations must be disguised for them to produce their specific effects.

There is some uncertainty regarding actors' investments in socialising and social exchanges. The disinterestedness in accumulation of capital and denial of calculation of the exchanges that help produce socio-symbolic capital involve a lack of security. It is not guaranteed that the investment of time and social energy will eventually result in a mutual acknowledgement and the related and repeated exchanges of symbolic and material resources like gifts, services, recognition, visits and monetary assistance (Bourdieu 1986). The tacit refusal of calculation

of and the uncertainty of return from the practices and work of sociability inform people's practices also in Colobane; they engage in multi-activity, engagement and mobilisation to build social relations and networks in various social fields of the neighbourhood.

Social capital is not only a product of labour, it can also be inherited (Bourdieu 1986). Such capital is often symbolised by a well-known family name and makes the actor particularly efficient and able in the transformation of contingent relations into lasting social relationships. Their name stands for a large volume of capital and social power, something that eases their work of sociability; they are known to and approached by more people than they know themselves. Social relationships and capital may also be institutionalised in a group, for instance, through the application of a common name (Bourdieu 1986). Much like in the case of the inherited social capital of a well-known name, a title of nobility equals institutionalised social capital that facilitates social contacts to be transformed into durable and recognised social relationships. This example also implies that a group as a whole can be represented by a subgroup, here the *nobiles*; a clearly delimited group of people who are known and recognised by all and may speak on behalf of and exercise authority in the name of the whole group (Bourdieu 1986). However, as such common sense authority of representation is part of the *doxa* and involves misappropriation, it may be questioned under certain conditions of crises or great changes when new and critical opinions and discourses are promoted. This is evident in the neighbourhood of Colobane, where the common sense authority and power of the notables have been discussed, if not openly challenged (see chapters 5 and 6).

### ***The socio-symbolic capital of representation***

Social relationships and capital may be institutionalised through more or less institutionalised forms of delegation, too (Bourdieu 1986). The mechanisms of delegation and representation involve a concentration of social capital, as an agent or small group is provided with a mandate from the group to act or speak in its name. Thus, the spokesperson is granted the capital of the collectivity through the delegation of the power of representation from and of the group. In addition to the example of the nobility, Bourdieu (1986) explains how the head of a family, habitually one of its most senior members, often is tacitly and symbolically recognised as its spokesperson and representative and thus the one who speaks or acts on behalf of the group in various situations. The question of delegation of representation is also related to leadership in more formalised groups like religious associations or neighbourhood

organisations. Legitimate representation is among the main stakes of network politics and is evident in the politics of practices in most social fields. This is evident in this thesis, where the logics and negotiations related to the delegation of symbolic power and representation is discussed not only in the chapters (10 and 11) that deal with the associational life of Colobane, but also those covering the religious and political fields of the neighbourhood (chapters 6–9). It is evident that social relationships and networks are means for the negotiated flow and exchange of both symbolic and material resources.

The mandate of representation and delegation by a group confers a great amount of social capital in the hands of a representative and entails its conversion into symbolic capital. This is due to the symbolic constitution of social relationships and the related material and symbolic exchanges, as well as the delegation of representation by the group. Bourdieu (1986) holds the power of representation as closely related to symbolic systems and the power of definition. As mentioned above, symbolic capital is achieved when the other types of capital are recognised as legitimate, or, according to Bourdieu; misrecognised as natural and therefore unquestioned. Symbolic capital involves recognition and legitimacy, and is of vital importance in the social world and particularly the political field. This is manifest in the struggles for legitimate authority and thus the power to construct official versions of the social world and so determine people's conceptions and perceptions of it (Harriss et al. 2004).

### ***Bourdieu's conception of a formal political field***

Bourdieu portrays the political field as a highly autonomous and formal field, dominated by professionals and their struggle for legitimate representation of the non-professionals (Bourdieu 1991). The principal stake of the political field is the power of representation, and this results in an intense competition for political capital, the field-specific form of symbolic capital, of the recognised right to speak on behalf of others. Bourdieu (1991) portrays the political field as almost entirely dictated by the professionals of political parties, the state apparatus and bureaucracy. As a field with a high degree of autonomy, it holds high barriers for participation and entry for newcomers. It thus requires a lot of labour for a newcomer to engage in the struggles of the political field and compete with the dominant professionals who work to defend their positions of power (Bourdieu 1993). Political capital may be both personal and institutionalised. The professionals of the political field can hold personal symbolic capital, like the recognition of being legitimate representatives. Their capital may

also be related to and dependent upon the vast amounts of the institutionalised capital of the field, often residing in political parties, bureaucracies and state institutions (Bourdieu 1991). This makes the political power of the professional not only determined by the amount and variation of her or his personal capital, but also by the institutionalised political capital acquired through investing time and energy in political institutions which in return grant her or him part of its political capital. For the analysis of local politics in Colobane, it means that it is not only the actors of this local political space, such as the inhabitants and their representatives, involved in the negotiations for legitimate representation and the exchange of material and symbolic resources that makes a difference. The power relations between them and their practices are influenced also by the many institutions present.

## **Generating an extended notion of politics**

I will argue that although Bourdieu's conception of the formal political field is fruitful to analyse parts of Senegalese politics, such as the competition among politicians through a characteristic and lasting factionalism (Barker 1973, Beck 1997, 2008), his view of politics restricted to and in this field is relatively narrow and should be expanded for the analysis of network politics (Stokke and Selboe forthcoming). It is vital that the reciprocal relations and negotiations between politicians and inhabitants is included for the concept of political field to be fruitful in this context. How their interaction and mutual practices take place also outside formal political institutions and include informal arrangements within the private sphere, and thus across societal fields, must also be taken into account. This implies that I will appropriate and adjust Bourdieu's concepts to a Senegalese setting and the empirical context of this project: the neighbourhood of Colobane and its politics. This may be a challenge, but his concepts are of general analytical value and it is in line with his recommendation of relating them to specific contexts. In his view, theoretical conceptualisation and development is only relevant and important when related to empirical studies and particular and historic contexts (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992).

Confronted with Senegalese politics, Bourdieu's conceptualisation of the political is actualised and extended. It first of all involves loosening up his conception of an autonomous and formal political field. By extending his analysis of social practice not only into the

political field (Wacquant 2005), but also into religious and social fields, and their intersections, the notion of the political will be enlarged. The insights of the perspectives on state-society relations and postcolonial African politics should direct this development to grasp the plurality of political practices and spaces in Senegal. These illustrate the need to acknowledge and investigate the blurred boundaries between state and society, between formal and informal or private spheres, as well as between formal politics and institutions and the social practices and networks of everyday life. I will argue that it is particularly rewarding to combine Bourdieu's notions with the contextualised understanding of Bayart. For instance, where Bourdieu contributes to understanding the logics of fields and their stakes, his approach to politics suffers from the somewhat narrow focus on the internal competition between what he calls the professionals of a formal political field. While Bayart also portrays the daily realities of politics as conflictual, like in the personal rivalry and competition between different political factions, he demonstrates that such struggles and tendencies of division are not only present in the state and political parties. He holds that the same political logic and practices go for other social actors and groups, such as popular movements and local associations (Bayart 1993).

An expansion of Bourdieu's conception of politics would entail acknowledging how political practices and networks go across various social fields. In Bayart's account of politics in the postcolonial African state, political practices and struggles was shown to stretch beyond the formal political field, like when religious leaders are co-opted and serve as intermediaries between state authorities and religious followers, or when actors straddle the relatively formal arenas of the state and bureaucracy and those of business or private everyday life. These variations present a wider notion of politics and more flexible political space, where a multitude of struggles, political arenas, social fields, scales and institutional levels are implicated. Although not part of or explicitly conceptualised by Bourdieu's notion of the formal political field, this idea is not entirely different from his theory of practice. It has a certain resonance in his argument of the similarities across social fields (Bourdieu 1991) and of the relative conformity of the habitus and relational positions of power across fields. This fits well with the accounts of Bayart (1993) of how the politics of the belly involve actors, their practices and social relations in networks that do not follow or respect the conceptual separation of social fields, but run across and amalgamate social, political, economic and religious arenas and fields. It is such a broad view of politics that was adhered to in the introduction of this thesis and this chapter, where social practices and relations are seen as



political and related to the struggles of all actors in a multitude of social networks and fields. This is necessary to grasp the network politics of Senegal, analyse state-society relations and explore the politics of social practices, discourses and relations in the political field, the religious field and associational life in Colobane.

Here, not only local authorities but also inhabitants engage and struggle to reach their goals. The inequality among social groups and actors does not imply that it is only the elites that are politically active; the political practices of dominated actors and groups should also be acknowledged. Hence, taking this seriously means including the actors that Bourdieu refers to as the non-professional or dominated actors, and to acknowledge their practices as a vital part of struggles in the local political space. They engage in political practices and mobilise, both in relation to the representatives of formal political institutions, but also through their social networks and various social, religious and economic groups and associations which serve as political channels in addition to their original functions. Bayart (1993) argues that it is common for all social actors both to engage in local struggles and to be politically active, or to 'do politics', through being faithful to and promoting the interests of a leader or faction. Dominating and less powerful individuals are both related to political networks and leaders which serve them in their struggles to promote their own interests and to accumulate needed capital.

Actually, recognising the mutuality of both horizontal and vertical social relations, despite power inequalities, is vital to understanding politics as practised in Senegal. This entails that Bourdieu's (1991) account of the struggles of the formal political field, where the fierce competition among professionals is accentuated as predominant, must be somewhat altered to emphasise also their relations to and the practices of the represented non-professionals. Although his indication that the political professionals only serve the interests of the represented in so far as they also serve their own interests is expressed and felt among the inhabitants of the neighbourhood in Colobane, it is also evident in this context that the relations between represented and representatives must be included and explored. There are unequal but mutual relations and negotiations between politicians and inhabitants over the delegation of the symbolic power of representation, that often take place through an exchange of material and symbolic resources. This inter-relation of actors in this socio-political system and local political space is actually implicit in Bourdieu's conception of social space and fields, which he portrays as made up of the interrelations of positions, and thus actors, and the

power relations between them. It is therefore logical to extend the analysis of local politics and the struggles of political actors beyond the elites of the formal political field to include also marginalised or more middle-level groups, and elites of other social fields. They all participate and compete across the fields of the social world and participate in both horizontal and vertical interaction within the political network system where they negotiate over symbolic and material power and resources, which are central stakes in the local politics of Colobane.

In the Senegalese context, it is vital to acknowledge not only the symbolic aspects of politics, but also their interrelation with material aspects. Hence, one must explore the material basis of politics to notice other relevant stakes than the one of recognised and legitimate symbolic representation. All the perspectives presented in this chapter touch upon the political and economic power of state institutions, and how it is strongly competed for. Also Bourdieu (1995) acknowledges how the struggles of the field of power are often related to a battle for domination over the state and its political and economic resources, which make it possible to exercise power over most social fields and the rules that direct them. He signals that positions of power in the political field may give access to economic capital, both in the form of a salary and possibly the private appropriation of, for instance, state resources (Bourdieu 1998, Stokke and Selboe forthcoming). This is in accordance with Bayart's (1993) account of postcolonial African politics as mainly centred around access to the state, where political power and economic accumulation are deeply intertwined. However, it is vital to include other political actors and social fields, and again one can find inspiration from the notions of the politics of the belly and of network politics, where various actors struggle over access to economic resources and political power. There is a dialectics of the material and symbolic dimensions of politics; struggles for domination and transformation are not only about representation and political power, but are also related to the imperative of economic accumulation and its distribution due to harsh material conditions. For many, the stakes of political struggles are mere survival and coping in everyday life. Thus, in this wider network politics, the stakes are related to the accumulation of both symbolic and economic capital.

In the neighbourhood of Colobane, there are constant negotiations over and exchanges of symbolic and material resources between actors. These are among the central practices of a network politics taking place across social fields. In Bourdieu's words, it is about the politics of social exchanges. Social capital is made effective and provided with the symbolic capital of

recognition, obligations and lasting affiliation through such mutual relations and exchanges. Inserting this notion into the context of political struggles, it provides a possibility for grasping how actors of a local political space are informed by the tacit imperative of building and accumulating social capital to access both symbolic and material resources. It is however also among the conscious strategies of the local actors who aim to achieve political authority or economic capital. One example might be the tacit logic or conscious use of patron-client relations, which may generate possible benefits but also involve certain obligations for both parties, despite the power difference among them and irrespective of who initiated the relation. Such a relation and the involved exchanges might secure for a local politician the symbolic power of recognition as a legitimate representative (which may also be expressed in votes) and provide material security and a certain influence to the individual in the client position of the relation.

Thus, by combining the insights of perspectives on state-society relations, the postcolonial African state and the politics of social practices, one can develop fruitful tools for the analysis of Senegalese network politics. They form a conceptual framework that acknowledges the plurality of political spaces and practices, as well as the power relations between actors. A broad conception of politics results from the inclusion of the material, symbolic and discursive aspects of politics, as well as actors at different levels of the social strata. They all mobilise through personal relationships and various networks across social fields and in both formal and informal arenas to promote their interest and accumulate political, economic or symbolic capital.



## 4. The (re)negotiations of the Senegalese social contract

This chapter<sup>4</sup> aims to analyse state-society relations in postcolonial Senegal. Religious institutions and leaders, *marabouts*, have been important mediators in the relations between state and society in Senegal. It is the close relationship between the marabouts and their followers which has constituted the basis of the postcolonial Senegalese social contract (Cruise O'Brien 1992). This social contract is comprised by the negotiated relations and mutual dependence between the population, the state and the marabouts. Its foundation was laid during the colonial period, but the social contract was consolidated by the continued collaboration between the religious and political authorities in postcolonial Senegal. This relatively stable system of state-society relations, also marked by network politics and patron-client relations, was reproduced as long as the exchange of material and symbolic resources benefited all three parties of the social contract.

The main part of this chapter explores the renegotiation of the social contract, as it was challenged by a range of changes and crises in Senegalese society. Socio-economic and political crises and a society-induced pressure for change led the political authorities into a process of liberalisation that created improved opportunities in national politics over time. In the context of increased access to information and religious revival, the religious authorities also had to alter their practices when their followers changed their discourse in a way that challenged their political authority. This paved the way for popular mobilisation, particularly strong among the urban youth, and an oppositional coalition that together managed to dethrone the regime of the *Partie Socialiste* (PS) which had been in power for forty years. These wide-ranging changes in national political, religious and social fields constitute the context of the practices and relations of local actors in the neighbourhood of Colobane, which are analysed in this dissertation. This chapter provides a background for the following chapters exploring the research question regarding local political practices and spaces, and the underlying question on the relations between local and national politics. In 2002, when the *Alternance* (the change of power) was consolidated through presidential, legislative and local elections, the population had great expectations of continued democratisation and hopes of real improvements in their living conditions.

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<sup>4</sup> This chapter draws on my MPhil thesis on changes in the political role of Islam in Senegal (Selboe 2001).

## **The intermediary of Islam in Senegalese state-society relations**

To understand the (re)negotiations of the Senegalese social contract, it is vital first to analyse the close ties between the marabouts and the population as their followers. One must also consider how the position of power and intermediation of the religious leaders and institutions developed during the colonial period, and explore the continued lack of direct relations between state and society in postcolonial Senegal, to understand the negotiations and exchanges characterising the social contract. The intermediary role of Sufi-Islam in state-society relations has created a relatively stable religio-political system, although somewhat renegotiated in the last few decades.

### ***Senegalese Sufi-Islam and the ties between marabouts and followers***

In Senegal about 95% of the population is Muslim, and the great majority of people belong to a *tariqa*, a Sufi order, and follow its marabouts (Mbacké 2005, Mbow 2008). For many Senegalese, the affiliation to a marabout and a Sufi order is an important part of their lives, and it is this close relation between marabout and follower which is particular to the Senegalese Sufi-model. The Sufi orders have a hierarchical structure, with a leader, the *khalife générale*, and many marabouts at lower levels. The Mouridiya and Tidjaniya are the two main orders in Senegal, and are greater, both in number and importance, than the smaller Quadiriya and Layenne orders. In the last few decades reformist currents have gained importance and influence, even if they still constitute only a small fraction of Senegalese Islam (Coulon and Cruise O'Brien 1989, Magassouba 1985, Villalon 1995, 1999, 2007, Villalon and Kane 1998).

The Sufi orders have different origins, but are today large and transnational organisations run by the dynasties of the founders' descendants. The founders are referred to as saints and it is believed that the significant marabouts in Senegal today have received their spiritual power through heredity. This holy power is called *baraka* and is believed to give marabouts a connection to God, supernatural powers and qualified insight in Islam. This makes them desirable religious leaders for the population, who are assumed to be ensured contact with God and entry into paradise through their marabouts. In addition, they may benefit from the transmission of their prestige and holy power through prayers and physical contact (Behrman

1970, Cruise O'Brien 1975, Guèye 2001, Hedin, Svanberg and Westerlund 1994, Rosander 1997b, Rosander and Westerlund 1994, Villalon 1993, Villalon 1995, Villalon 1999). The affiliation of an individual to a Sufi order and marabout may be selected freely, but is often influenced by the allegiance of his or her family. Both men and women are followers of marabouts and orders, but only a male follower has the possibility of being formally admitted to a Sufi order through a ceremony where he promises his devotion to the marabout 'in this world and the next' (Beck 1996, Callaway and Creevey 1994, Creevey 1996, Piga 2002, Rosander 1997d).

The relations between marabouts and followers have been mediated through religious institutions such as the *daara* and *dahira*. The previously important and widespread *daara* is a rurally based unit of agricultural production and religious instruction where male followers live and work on the land of their marabout (Copans 1988, Coulon 1983, Cruise O'Brien 1971, Magassouba 1985). Like the *daara*, today's most common religious association, the *dahira*, creates strong ties between followers and the marabout/order, and union among followers (Beck 1996, Selboe 2001, Villalon 2004). The *dahiras* constitute flexible ways of organising the followers of a particular marabout, a Sufi order or its *khalife générale*. They form vital collective arenas where the followers meet, and perform and plan their religious rituals and activities. There is great diversity among *dahiras*, which may have from a handful active members to several hundred official ones. It is possible to be a member of several *dahiras* at the same time, as they may be based on place of residence, place of work or educational institution (Magassouba 1985). Most often men and women participate together, but some *dahiras* are segregated by gender (Mbow 1997), and there are also international *dahiras* which assemble emigrated followers abroad (Babou 2002, Kaag 2008, Rosander 1997d, 2001b, 2006). *Dahiras* have social and economic significance in addition to their key religious functions. The socialisation, social networks and solidarity of members amounts to a system of social security through practices of mutual help. Also, the contact with one's marabout through the *dahira* is a possible source of needed assistance for followers (Beck 2001, Cruise O'Brien 1975, 1988, Guèye 2001, Mbow 1997, Piga 2002, Rosander 1997d, Selboe 2001, Villalon 1995). The roles of *dahiras* will be further discussed below and explored also in chapter 8 on religious associations in Colobane.

### *The use of religious intermediaries by colonial authorities*

The Sufi orders were formed in a period of decline of the traditional authority systems in the pre-colonial states. The openness and accommodation of Sufism to existing local traditions, religion and society eased the spread of Sufi-Islam. As the population sought refuge in the new Sufi organisation when faced with societal disintegration, the orders became the foundation of the new social organisation at the turn to the twentieth century. The marabouts became as vital leaders of society to constitute a source of pressure on the French colonialists. However, as the relationship between the marabouts and colonial powers improved, military confrontations were replaced by collaboration and the marabouts functioned as intermediaries between the rural population and the colonial authorities (Beck 1996, Coulon 1983, Creevey 1985, Cruise O'Brien 1971, Guèye 2001, Hedin et al. 1994, Quinn 2003, Rosander 1997b, Villalon 1993, 1999).

The foundation for the postcolonial social contract was thus elaborated under the colonial period in Senegal. The French colonial administration used indirect rule through the religious leaders and institutions to develop the agricultural economy and to control and manage the Senegalese population and territory (Beck 2002, Creevey 2006, Cruise O'Brien 2002a, Galvan 2001, Villalon 2004). To promote and produce the cash-crop groundnuts they allied with the marabouts, who started cultivation with the assistance of their followers. The production and trade of groundnuts secured valuable income both for the colonialists and the marabouts, and thus created good material conditions for the Sufi orders (Beck 1996, Boone 1990, Creevey 1985, Cruise O'Brien 1975, 2002c). The colonial state was assisted by the marabouts also in relation to administration, tax collection and implementation of policies (Magassouba 1985). In exchange for their collaboration they were provided with material and symbolic support, and their interests were protected. This cooperation between the colonial state and the marabouts was based on mutual benefit and shared economic and political interests. Paradoxically, the secular French colonial state became the frame of the establishment of the Sufi orders and the expansion of the power and authority of their marabouts (Beck 2008, Cruise O'Brien 1992, Rosander and Westerlund 1994).

As Senegalese politicians became politically active in the colonial state, they also depended upon the alliance of the marabouts. After decolonialisation, Senghor and his party *Bloc Démocratique Sénégalais* (BDS), later to become the *Partie Socialiste* (PS), gained the



presidency and political power in postcolonial Senegal due to the support of the marabouts (Villalon 2004). As the required ability and legitimacy needed to mobilise and directly represent the population was also lacking in the postcolonial period, the collaboration of the marabouts was a prerequisite for the PS to stay in power. Thus, the socio-political role of marabouts and Sufi orders persisted in postcolonial Senegal and they kept their central position as intermediaries in state-society relations (Behrman 1970, Coulon 1983, Creevey 1985, Creevey et al. 2005, Magassouba 1985, Rosander and Westerlund 1994, Villalon 1995).

### *State and society in postcolonial Senegal*

State-society relations in Senegal have been characterised by difficulties of establishing formal institutional bonds, as the state has lacked the required ability and legitimacy to mobilise and directly represent the population (Creevey 2006, Cruise O'Brien 1975, 2002c, 2003, Selboe 2001). This encouraged the continuance of marabouts as intermediaries, and the establishment of the postcolonial social contract. In this situation, interaction in informal networks and the use of intermediaries have acquired particular importance in national and local politics. The party-state secured support through distributing material resources through such networks, both to clients and to the marabouts and Sufi orders (Beck 1999, 2002, Boone 1990, Fatton 1986). The aim was to indirectly access the networks and institutions that organise the population through the marabouts. The state support and distribution of resources to the marabouts and their orders has also benefited the population as portions of it has been redistributed to followers (Beck 1996, Cruise O'Brien 1992).

The postcolonial Senegalese state retained several colonial structures and is based on the French state model (Loimeier 1996). It is a secular state with an extensive bureaucracy, where the bureaucratic elite have great influence on the economy. The political power and activity has been mainly concentrated in the capital Dakar and urban areas, but this hierarchical political system has also involved a more indirect administration with intermediaries in rural areas (Beck 2008, Cruise O'Brien 2002c). This has created problems of efficiency in the administration and ambivalence between different parts of the state (Amundsen 1997, Villalon 1995, Villalon and Kane 1998). Since independence in 1960, the Senegalese state has been equated with the PS, which stayed in power for 40 years. The power of government was monopolised and the first president, Léopold Sédar Senghor, secured control through autocratic recruitment to the government, departments, party, state and administration (Beck

1997, Creevey and Vengroff 1997). Until the mid 1970s Senegal was a highly centralised one-party state and it was not until 1981, when Diouf became president, that a complete multi-party system was introduced. Despite this political opening, the PS and Diouf kept their position of power for almost another 20 years, particularly due to the political support of their many clients (Beck 1996, 2008, Gellar 1995, 2005, Magassouba 1985).

The PS regime developed a great network of collaborators and clients, both within the state and in its relations with society (Beck 1997, 1999, 2003, 2008, Diop and Diouf 1990). Along with the control by recruitment, this made it possible for the PS to secure political loyalty in exchange for material benefits and access to public positions and resources. The PS regime thus obtained support, dominated the state and economy, and controlled the legislature, the judiciary and the executive political institutions (Beck 1996). However, there has been concurrent internal political competition, manifested in the power struggles between different factions (also called clans in Senegal) of the political parties and the state (Beck 1997, 2002, Dahou 2002, Fatton 1986). These function as separate client networks, formed around prominent persons who provide protection and material assistance in exchange for political support (Beck 1996, Cruise O'Brien 1975, 2002c, Galvan 2001, Prag 2004). The struggles between the factions and their supporters created divisions and problems within the PS (Barker 1973, Creevey et al. 2005). In 1995, the PS government had to postpone the local elections when the process of nomination created intense antagonism between PS activists (Worre 1997).

This factionalism demonstrates the non-monolithic characteristics of the state, party and administration. Employees of these bodies must relate to the mentioned clientelist and factional networks, where they might be responsible for securing aid and benefits related to food, housing, ceremonies, education or work for their personal contacts and political allies. These practices help secure their position in the internal political competition and answer popular demands more generally (Beck 1999, 2008, Selboe 2001, Villalon 1995). In a situation with a lack of resources, state assets are used to create connections to society and co-opt some of its central actors. It is the need for services and resources that makes the population, both as individuals and social groups, engage in relation to the state. This has made it possible for the political authorities of Senegal to influence and partly control at least the formal organisation of society by favouring the individuals and groups following their preferred pattern of action and organisation. For instance, the PS opposed the formation of

political parties based on ethnicity, religion or region and required organisations to fulfil certain demands to obtain official recognition, state registration and financial support (Magassouba 1985).

Informal power, organisation, relations and strategies of contact are thus important in this political system. Following Bayart's (1993) account of network politics, both the Senegalese elites and the population at large are dependent upon the networks of social contacts provided by family, friends, personal contacts and patrons/clients or supporters to access needed material and symbolic resources through negotiated exchanges. In these extensive social networks formed of personal bonds between elites and more marginalised political actors, the borders between state and society become diffuse and it is nearly impossible to separate formal and informal politics or public and private spheres. This system is flexible and based on innovative solutions where personal connections in various societal fields are used to optimise and gain the most functional arrangement for survival, accumulation and power. Individual citizens or social groups use the network system to approach state or party representatives, directly or through personal contacts within the political system (Blundo 2007) or through their relations to a marabout. This is to access needed material resources. When the advantages of engagement in relation to the state are no longer obvious or societal discontent is strong, the state has decreased influence and the population may employ strategies of isolation. One example is how Senegalese peasants on some occasions have stopped producing export crops or sold their crop illegally outside the state system (Boone 1990). The scarcity within agriculture and general economic limitations in Senegal have not, however, provided a big potential for isolation; in this situation the support of the authorities and institutions of the Sufi orders have provided the population with a strengthened position in their relations to the state (Coulon and Cruise O'Brien 1989, Kane and Villalon 1995, Villalon 1999, 2004).

## **The postcolonial social contract**

To understand Senegalese state-society relations, it is vital to grasp the relations between and the incentives that motivate three different sets of actors; the state, the marabouts and the population in their dual roles as citizens and religious followers. This is called the Senegalese

‘social contract’ by Cruise O’Brien (1992:9), and entails that one cannot understand the relations between two of these actors without considering their relation to the third party (Villalon 1995). The mutual interaction between these actors has created a relative balance of power between state and society in postcolonial Senegal and a relatively stable political system. Although primarily visible in the well-established relations between political and religious authorities, the basis of the social contract is the trust and close relations of religious followers to their religious leaders, the marabouts (Magassouba 1985).

### ***Marabouts and followers***

To the population as religious followers, the marabouts are first and foremost religious leaders providing religious guidance and entrance to paradise, but the politics of exchange of the Senegalese social contract also has an irresistible logic (Cruise O’Brien 1992). Thus, by granting the marabouts authority also in economic and political fields and securing them a vital position in Senegalese society (Magassouba 1985), the followers may profit from their central position in the informal networks related to the state, where resources are distributed and redistributed. Hence, the religious, socio-economic and political possibilities of followers have depended on their relation to their marabouts, and been a vital part of their strategies for survival, accumulation and promotion. On the other hand, the position of marabouts in the negotiations with the state is dependent upon the number and loyalty of their followers. As legitimate religious leaders to whom the population has declared their allegiance and belonging, the marabouts have a strong position in their relations with the political authorities which have lacked this legitimate authority and recognition as representatives of the population. As the population have more trust in, loyalty to and acknowledgment of the authority of marabouts than the political authorities of the postcolonial state, they have served as mediators between the Senegalese population and the state (Amundsen 1997, Coulon 1983, Coulon and Cruise O’Brien 1989, Cruise O’Brien 2003, Selboe 2001, Villalon 1995, Villalon and Kane 1998).

The close relation of religious followers to their marabouts has at times been described as one of total subjection, and likewise the religious institutions of the orders as exploitative (Cruise O’Brien 1975). For instance, *daaras* been referred to as justsources of free labour for the marabouts, securing the expansion of their profitable agricultural production. However, the hard work put in by the *talibes* also secured them certain benefits, as they were often provided

with a plot of land and necessary means for farming when they left the *daara* (Cruise O'Brien 1988, Magassouba 1985, Piga 2002). Followers have always and still do take into consideration and act in relation to their own interests, even if this is rarely openly expressed. The hidden conditions to their apparent loyalty and obedience are however recognised by the marabouts who consider their potential regroupement (Cruise O'Brien 1992, Selboe 2001). The increasing number of marabouts with every new generation of descendants of the founders of the orders creates an internal competition for followers and leadership. This makes it vital for marabouts not only to sustain and legitimate their bond with existing followers, but also to invest to attract new followers (Villalon 1995, 2007, Villalon and Kane 1998). Thus, the marabouts redistribute to their followers part of the material resources and income derived from state support, agricultural production, transport, trade and the contributions of their followers. This is an important way for the marabouts to nurture their relations with followers, in addition to serving as their religious guides. As the power of the marabouts is not absolute, it is imperative to keep followers content and satisfied with the negotiated arrangement to sustain their power and authority (Cruise O'Brien 1975, 1992, Magassouba 1985, Selboe 2001).

The social organisation based on religious institutions and associations has linked the marabouts and followers, and provided advantages for both. Some marabouts, particularly in the Mouridiya order, receive large annual contributions from *dahiras*, collected by the members throughout the year (Diop 1981, Mbacké 2005, Rosander 1997d). *Dahira* membership and the bond to a marabout have helped the Senegalese population as followers to secure needed resources in a context of scarcity. In addition to the solidarity among followers, the *dahiras* also help nurture the links to the order and create contact with the marabouts through regular communication, religious festivals and visits (Villalon 2007). Through the marabouts, the religious associations link the population to the political network system where material and symbolic resources are exchanged and hence influence, power and authority are distributed in Senegalese society (Beck 1996, Rosander 1997d). In addition to securing benefits for followers through their relations to the PS regime, the marabouts have provided assistance to individual followers, for example, related to work, housing and various disputes. They have also served as political spokesmen for their followers in relation to the state. In periods where the income of peasants was low and the state neglected to raise the prices on groundnuts in correlation with the development of world market prices, the marabouts demanded higher prices and encouraged the followers to temporarily stop

production (Worre 1997), revert to subsistence farming or engage in illegal export to Gambia (Cruise O'Brien 1975). In 1980 the Mouride leader Abdou Lahat managed to persuade President Senghor to double the prices on groundnuts, write off most of the debt of the peasants and to assign him large tracts of land (Beck 1996, Diop and Diouf 1990). Thus, the population have depended upon the marabouts in not only religious, but also socio-economic and political issues.

### ***Marabouts and political authorities***

The great symbolic power of the marabouts, as recognised and legitimate representatives of their followers, has been the basis for their profitable collaboration with the political authorities of Senegal. It has provided them with central positions in dynamic religious, social and economic networks which all have obvious political potential. Thus, the political authorities which have been deficient in such close interaction with the population and lacked legitimacy, developed a dependency upon the assistance of the marabouts in economic and administrative issues, and particularly in the politics of elections. The negotiated return of capital to the marabouts has secured a relatively peaceful and stable collaboration between political and religious authorities in Senegal.

The relatively stable cooperation between the state and the marabouts is a result of negotiated mutual benefits. The Senegalese state has been assisted by the marabouts in the production of groundnuts, local administration and tax collection. The political authorities have also been dependent upon the marabouts and their Sufi institutions to deliver the loyalty of their followers to secure votes and political legitimacy (Beck 1996, Coulon and Cruise O'Brien 1989, Creevey et al. 2005, Cruise O'Brien 1992, 2002c, 2003, Rosander and Westerlund 1994, Villalon 1995). Indeed, marabouts gained a reputation as the power brokers of Senegalese politics as they gave election *ndigëls*, orders or recommendations, that were respected by their followers. These practices of political mobilisation and election orders from the marabouts have led them to be courted by political parties and representatives (Beck 2008, Behrman 1970, Creevey and Vengroff 1997, Magassouba 1985, Villalon 2004, 2007).

The marabouts and the Sufi orders have also greatly benefited from the collaboration with state authorities. Their central position in the agricultural economy gave exceptional possibilities of building an independent economic base, which was expanded as the marabouts

spread their economic activity to trade, transport and real estate speculation with the general decline in farming (Cruise O'Brien 1975, Selboe 2001, Worre 1997). This was made possible by the assistance from the party-state and government which provided great land areas, services and economic support for agricultural production (Beck 1996), and gave loans, financial contributions and licences for import and export when the marabouts diversified their economic affairs (Magassouba 1985). In addition, individual marabouts received personal donations and the PS regime considered the interests of the orders in their regional and development politics through prioritised allocation of, for instance, roads, electricity, agricultural projects and water provision (Cruise O'Brien 1992). This material assistance and protection of interest involves a symbolic recognition of the marabouts and the orders.

This symbolic recognition and its dynamics are particularly evident in local and national religious celebrations, where political authorities make sure to provide material and technical assistance as well as to have representatives present (Cruise O'Brien 2003). This is evident, for instance, in the annual Gammou of the Tidjan order in Tivaouvane, remembering the birth of the prophet, but maybe even more so in the annual grand Maggal in Touba (Coulon 1999, Piga 2002). This religious celebration of the Mourides, involving a pilgrimage to their holy city, gathers numerous followers. This displays the importance of the marabouts and their potential influence on their followers, and confirms the overall importance of the Sufi system, both to the followers and the political elites. On the other hand, the presence of representatives from the state, government and political parties, both at public ceremonies and in private meetings with marabouts, reveals their symbolic recognition of the marabouts and their dependence upon them. This contributes to the position of power of the marabouts in their exchanges, as well as in relation to their followers. The attendance of political representatives and the material support provided by the state may help build legitimacy and establish a certain recognition from the population as followers. It is assumed that this state financing of roads, water delivery and health institutions in Touba, partly to achieve the benevolence and votes of the Mourides, has greater influence than other types of financial or material support, as the Mourides identify strongly with their holy city (Coulon 1999, Coulon and Cruise O'Brien 1989, Cruise O'Brien 1992, 2003, Guèye 2001, 2002, Loimeier 1996, Piga 2002, Villalon 1995, 2007).

The good relations with the marabouts and the resulting contact with the population, has not been free of costs for the PS regime, which paid a high price to maintain its legitimacy in this

indirect way (Cruise O'Brien 1992, Villalon 1995). However, the collaboration between the state and the marabouts is not only a result of the benefits from the negotiated exchanges among them. The personal relations and alliances between individuals of the political and religious elite are also vital. Most state employees and politicians have personal bonds to a marabout, and consult them not only for religious reasons, but also for progress in the state, politics, business and life in general (Coulon and Cruise O'Brien 1989, Cruise O'Brien 1992, Villalon 1995, 2007). Individuals of the religious and political elite have used their mutual contact in the struggles and competition within the religious and political fields, respectively (Behrman 1970). Politicians need alliances with certain marabouts to enhance their position and possibilities in the factionalism of their political party or a state structure, either at local or national level (Beck 2008). The personal relations and the exchange of resources with essential individuals in the state, party and administration are valuable also for a marabout, as it may be utilised in the increasingly visible competition for leadership in the orders (Beck 1996, Behrman 1970, Diaw and Diouf 1998, Villalon 1999).

Although the relations between the marabouts and the party-state are based on mutual engagement and dependence, there have been conflicts and variable climates of cooperation (Beck 1996, Creevey 1985, Villalon 1999). This is not only due to changing political, religious and economic contexts, but also the inherent ambiguity in concurrent mutual dependence, rivalry and incompatible long-term interests. The political elites have an urgent need for the collaboration of the marabouts in relation to the population, but also wish to marginalise them from the political field (Behrman 1970). The marabouts hope to maintain the state's dependence upon them to secure the resulting power and resources, while they at the same time want to keep their organisational autonomy and control over their followers. The political and religious authorities depend upon each other to keep their positions of power and reach their goals, but they are also rivals in the battle for legitimate authority over the population, as followers and as citizens (Cruise O'Brien 1992, Villalon 1995). The lasting interaction between marabouts and the state has been affected by internal struggles in the political and religious fields, the reformist alternative to the Sufi orders, and not least the reactions of the population to their collaboration (Cruise O'Brien 2003, Ingham 1990, Selboe 2001, Villalon 1995).

The rivalry within and among the Sufi orders has been used by the PS state to try to destabilise the strong position of marabouts (Behrman 1970) and to prevent them from



forming a united front and exploiting their political potential more actively (Creevey 1985, Piga 2002). The state also initiated an alliance with the reformist groups that grew in the 1980s to reduce the power and influence of the marabouts and Sufi orders, as they condemned and started a critical debate on the appropriateness of the great power of the marabouts and the established Sufi system in Senegal (Magassouba 1985). However, as the reformist critique also included the secular state and the PS did not manage to control or co-opt the reformist organisations, it was the orders that emerged strengthened as they incorporated the parts of the reformist discourse that had popular appeal with the Sufi majority of Senegal (Beck 1996, Coulon and Cruise O'Brien 1989, Selboe 2001, Villalon 1995, Villalon and Kane 1998).

In the 1980s, relations between the state and the marabouts were still good, reflected in the election *ndigël* of the Mouride *khalife* Abdou Lahat in favour of Diouf at the presidential elections of 1983. In a situation where the opposition gained wider support, the PS needed the expressed support of marabouts to keep their position. However, despite the election order of the Mouride leader, the election results from the Mouride heartland demonstrated a reduction in the support for the PS and the abstention of more than half of the electors. It appears that the followers did not want to defy the order of their religious leaders, but refused to vote for the PS, and therefore did not vote at all (Beck 1996, Cruise O'Brien 1983, Fatton 1986). The collaboration between the state and the marabouts continued, but this hesitation and doubt related to the election *ndigëls* and political practices of marabouts expressed by the Mouride followers in 1983 signalled the changes that would develop with the turn of the 1990s.

## **The renegotiation of the Senegalese social contract**

The social contract has on the whole been characterised by collaboration and engagement, but the relations between the marabouts, the state and the population in their twofold role as religious followers and citizens was challenged and renegotiated due to a wide range of changes in the socio-economic, political and religious fields of Senegalese society. An economic crisis, which created aggravated living conditions for the Senegalese population, gradually developed into a political crisis (Diop and Diouf 1990, Magassouba 1985) due to the political priorities of the PS regime (Creevey and Vengroff 1997, Fatton 1986). The result was a loss of legitimacy and an increasing pressure for change. In the political field, there was

slow but gradual liberalisation and reform which created increased political opportunities (Creevey et al. 2005), and in the religious field, marked by revival and increased debate, there were also significant changes in organisation, discourse and political practices. The result was a renegotiated Senegalese social contract and eventually a change of regime in 2000.

### ***Economic crisis***

Between independence in 1960 and 1980, the years when Senghor was president, the state increased its role in the economy. The public sector was directly controlled by the government and the private sector strongly regulated (Creevey and Vengroff 1997). The *Office National de Coopération et Assistance au Développement* (ONCAD) was created to secure the monopoly of the profitable trade and export of groundnuts. This domination of the national economy was aimed at creating and consolidating a material basis for the political power the PS regime (Diop and Diouf 1990). Through distributing state revenue to supporters and clients in various fields and institutions of Senegalese society, the PS regime secured their political support. However, their practices would prove to have long-term and problematic economic and political consequences (Beck 1996, Boone 1990, Cruise O'Brien 1992, Diaw and Diouf 1998, Diop and Diouf 1990).

A serious economic crisis became apparent in Senegal in the 1970s, which was reinforced by the practices of the PS state, where short-term political survival was prioritised before a healthy economic foundation (Diop and Diouf 1990). The priorities and policies of the PS regime in the agricultural sector, such as the 'legal' exploitation and misrule of the ONCAD and their failure to raise producer prices when the world market prices for groundnuts doubled, created debt and economic problems for peasants (Cruise O'Brien 1975, Magassouba 1985). Rural discontent mounted and peasants periodically withdrew to subsistence farming or sold their groundnuts unlawfully outside the public system. As result of these practices the PS not only faced a discontented rural population and decrease in export earnings, but also a seriously impaired economy and a rising burden of debt (Beck 1996, Creevey and Vengroff 1997, Cruise O'Brien 1992).

In 1980 the economic crisis led the government to enter into the first structural adjustment programme (SAP), when the World Bank (WB) and other international donors launched SAPs as a prerequisite for sustained loans and support (Creevey and Vengroff 1997, Gellar 1995).

The aim was to reduce the role of the state in the economy, to liberalise trade, and to increase public savings and investment in productive sectors. As the PS had to nurture their national supporters and internal clients too, the result was a rather half-hearted implementation. It was particularly hard for the regime to shrink the extensive public sector, as public employment and access to state resources was used to ease the socio-economic pressure on the regime and to sustain the institutional clientelistic network system (Creevey 1985, Diop and Diouf 1990). Still, the Senegalese population and society were widely affected by the SAPs. With the 'new' agricultural policy of 1984 the ONCAD was dissolved and state subsidies to peasants reduced, and later eliminated (Creevey and Vengroff 1997). The lack of state support and resulting marginalisation topped the great problems of recession, drought periods, lack of arable land and low producer prices that led to reduced harvests and income for the rural population (Cruise O'Brien 1975, Magassouba 1985). The result was increased urbanisation through migration to Dakar and other cities, called *l'exode rurale* or the flight from rural areas (Beck 1996, Cruise O'Brien 1992, Diaw and Diouf 1998, Gellar 1995, Mbow 1997). When import quotas were removed and customs duty reduced in an attempt to liberalise trade in 1986, Senegalese industry became unable to compete with imported goods and the population experienced demand-driven prices on almost all foodstuffs (Creevey and Vengroff 1997).

The economic problems were exacerbated by the French devaluation of the franc CFA by 50% in January 1994. The costs of import from international markets doubled and the value of export from CFA countries was halved. The Senegalese population suffered from worsened living conditions (Villalon and Kane 1998), for example, through the increase of the prices on both imported and domestically produced basic foodstuffs. The PS regime tried to limit the increase of prices on basic products, medications and fuel, due to the potential for political unrest, before they were forced to totally remove this price control (Creevey and Vengroff 1997). In this context of poverty, lack of resources, unemployment and growth of the informal sector, it became increasingly difficult for the Senegalese population to support themselves and their families (Gellar 1995). Many Senegalese live from day to day without predictable income, as it is more and more difficult to find fixed employment and many are forced to secure a certain revenue through occasional work in the informal sector (Fall 1998, Galvan 2001, Scheld 2007). Is it not unusual that a family of 10–20 persons have only a few employed members who have to support the rest of the family. Unemployment rose among the educated, who were previously offered positions in the public sector, as their discontent was gradually more articulated and constituted a threat to the PS regime (Mbow 1997, Worre

1997). Indeed, the economic crisis and its reinforcement due to the short-term survival strategies of the PS (Diop and Diouf 1990) led to popular dissatisfaction with the government and regime. The crisis of legitimacy became apparent in the demonstrations against the devaluation and the SAP and a general pressure for change.

### ***Political crisis and popular pressure for change***

A political crisis developed due to the popular dissatisfaction with the government's handling of the economic crisis and the resulting struggle for transformation (Magassouba 1985, Villalon 2004). The crisis of legitimacy of the PS regime was reinforced by their now impaired ability to implement promised measures to secure development and to spread resources to their supporters (Beck 1997, Boone 1990). The cross-pressure of national popular demand for political reform and of international focus on democratisation led to the necessity for the regime to give concessions to keep their national position of power and the international economic support (Creevey et al. 2005, Diop and Diouf 1990). The termination of the one-party state came in 1974 when the first opposition party, *Partie Democratique Senegalais* (PDS), was established. Two additional oppositional parties were allowed in 1976 and a full multi-party system was introduced in 1981 (Creevey and Vengroff 1997, Diaw and Diouf 1998, Gellar 1995, Magassouba 1985, Villalon 1994). The biggest opposition party, the PDS, and its candidate Abdoulaye Wade, increased their percentage of the votes for each presidential election; from 15% in 1983, to 26% in 1988 and to 32% in 1993 (Galvan 2001). The share of votes for the PS in the same elections decreased from 84%, to 73% and 58% respectively (Kanté 1994, Worre 1997). Thus, the Senegalese population experienced a political opening up, and the opposition had improved possibilities of mobilisation, even if their proposed political reforms were counteracted by partial implementation or strategic timing of the PS aimed to retain its power (Beck 1997, Beck 1999, Creevey et al. 2005).

The initiated process of political reform not only gave increased opportunities for the opposition parties, but also improved freedom of organisation and greater access to information, as the press became freer and the sources of information multiplied (Diop and Diouf 1990, Gellar 2005, Havard 2004). The state-controlled and operated radio, TV and newspapers saw the competition of independent newspapers and radio channels which were decreasingly controlled by the government, as well as of satellite TV (Diaw and Diouf 1998). This new access to information was mainly centred in urban areas, but was also partly spread

to rural areas (Beck 1996, Mbow 1997). The increased access to information gave the population a stronger awareness of the Diouf regime not keeping its promises to improve the economic situation and renew the process of democratisation. The crisis of legitimacy deepened and by the end of the 1980s, the demand for *sopi*, change in Wolof and the slogan of the PDS, became the common motto of the population; although most often and strongest expressed by the disillusioned urban youth (Diouf 1996, 2002a, Villalon 2007). When Diouf and PS won the elections in 1988, although with a smaller margin than in 1983, there were extensive protests against the announced results and demonstrations and riots against what was seen as political stagnation and fraud took place in urban areas (Beck 1997, Creevey et al. 2005, Creevey and Vengroff 1997, Diaw and Diouf 1998, Diop 2006, Diouf 2002b, Gellar 1995, Villalon 1994, 1999, 2004, Villalon and Kane 1998, Young and Kante 1992).

The continued national and international pressure led Diouf to invite the opposition to participate in a 'national government of unity' in 1991. PDS and parts of the opposition entered the government as Diouf and the PS were willing to negotiate a new electoral code, which had been a long-time demand from the population and oppositional parties (Beck 1996, 1997, Creevey and Vengroff 1997, Gellar 1995, Villalon 1994, 1999, 2007, Young and Kante 1992). Despite a few compromises with Diouf to pass the law, the new election code contained numerous improvements designed to secure greater justice in elections. The law prohibited political parties from using state resources in election campaigns, gave all parties access to state media and the possibility to be present at the registration of electors, the distribution of election cards and in the polling places. The minimum age was reduced from 21 to 18 years and secret ballot with voter identification became mandatory, along with the use of voting booths and irremovable ink that would stop the possibility of a person voting several times (Beck 1996, 1999, Creevey et al. 2005, Kanté 1994, Villalon 1994).

However, the PS again focused on keeping their political power, and thus limited the implementation of the election law through their relation and control over the administration, the courts, bureaucracy and parliament (Beck 1997, Creevey et al. 2005). The new election law gave the parliament expanded powers, something the PS took advantage of through their dominance of the parliament, for example, by making changes in the judicial system and amendments to the election law. PS also acted against the law through using state resources in their campaign and asking electors to confirm their PS vote by showing the unused cards of the opposition candidates to local electoral representatives. Those who in this way

demonstrated their vote for the PS were given a sum of money, often 500 f.cfa. (approx. 0.8 euro) (Beck 1996). In this way, the PS managed to hinder some of the effects of the new law threatening their position of power. Despite the lack of change, the new election law led to a more fair election in 1993 (Galvan 2001), and even if there were protests against the election results, the regime avoided a repetition of the crises of 1988. The earlier optimism of the population was turned to disappointment, as the prelude to and elections of 1993 once again showed the seriousness of the crisis of legitimacy of the regime and a growing popular distrust in the political elite (Beck 1996, Kanté 1994, Villalon 1994, 1999, 2007).

The devaluation of 1994 increased the economic problems of the population and led the popular discontent to be expressed once more. Political unrest and riots took place in urban areas and in Dakar great demonstrations led to clashes with the police. The government arrested several opposition leaders and demonstrators, and banned all demonstrations (Creevey and Vengroff 1997). However, the tense situation and pressure led Diouf again to invite key figures of the opposition into the government in 1995 (Beck 1999). This time, the opposition's collaboration with the PS impaired their legitimacy. The disappointment with the results of the democratic reforms and the re-entering of the opposition into the government made the population increasingly regard the whole political class as opportunist and the oppositional parties as part of the discredited system. The population was left disillusioned and with a feeling of hopelessness (Beck 1996, Creevey and Vengroff 1997, Diouf 1996, Villalon 1999).

The political crisis increased towards the end of the 1990s, as the PS continued to manipulate the rules of the political game to secure their continued power and hegemony, i.e. through continued reforms of the election laws and constitutional changes. When the parliamentary and presidential elections approached, the PS regime made sure the presidential position was extended from five to seven years, effective from 1993, leading the parliamentary elections to be held in 1998 and the presidential elections in 2000 (Villalon 1994, 1999). The paradox was however that even if these changes were 'legal', as the PS had over two-thirds of the seats of the national assembly, even if they were perceived as illegal or unlawful by the population and opposition. Again, the PS worked and struggled to secure the government of Senegal. Before the parliamentary elections in 1998, the PS changed the number of representatives from 120 to 140 and used a system of calculation giving them 66% of the seats even if they only had 50% of the votes. This secured the PS the majority they needed to change the

constitution to their benefit, and just after this election there was a vote to create a senate as a second chamber of the legislative assembly (Creevey et al. 2005). The senate was installed early in 1999, and the indirect system of election secured the PS the overwhelming majority of the seats also here. In 1998 the PS also changed the election law by annulling the restriction of the presidency to two terms of office, thus removing the regulation hindering Diouf's re-election in 2000 (Villalon 1999). These decisions were extremely unpopular, particularly with the younger and urban parts of the population, contributing to the increase of the crisis of the Diouf regime towards the end of the 1990s.

### ***Religious revival and debate***

The economic and political crisis in Senegal led to many changes in society in a period of simultaneous religious revival. In the early 1980s, Senegal experienced a revitalization of Islamic reformism (Piga 2002, Villalon 2004). This was related to trends in other African countries and the Muslim world, such as the Iranian revolution of 1979 (Villalon 2007). The reformists offered themselves as an alternative to the marabouts, criticising their monopoly on religious knowledge and teaching, and scrutinised the religious, social, economic and political practices of the marabouts and Sufi orders. Movements like the Al-Fallah and Ibadou Rahmane grew (Loimeier 2000, Piga 2002). In this period, a range of new religious associations and activities sprang up, new mosques were established and there was a growth in religious publications. There was also increased attention to religious instruction. The result was not a weakening of the established Senegalese Sufi-Islam, but a general religious resurgence where different religious questions were put on the agenda and discussed and a more conscious and demanding Muslim opinion was formed (Coulon and Cruise O'Brien 1989, Magassouba 1985, Selboe 2001, Villalon 1999).

As reformist Islam was unfamiliar and appeared strange to the population, who generally supported the dominating position of Sufism (Hedin et al. 1994), the orders managed to turn the renewed interest for Islam to their own advantage. They adjusted to the debates started by the reformists by incorporating elements of their thought and reasoning into their own discourse (Magassouba 1985, Villalon 1999, 2007, Villalon and Kane 1998). There was also a rise of new movements within the Sufi orders, that challenged the established religio-political order by borrowing from Islamist critiques (Villalon 2004). The religious revival thus also strengthened the existing Sufi system, despite intense debate of central religious issues and

discussion about the institutions and practices of the marabouts and orders (Selboe 2001). In a turbulent time of economic and political crisis, scarcity and urbanisation, people leaned on their Sufi-Islam and the religious associations that permeated most parts of their lives, both in the cities and in rural areas.

However, the religious debates led to increased attention to the marabouts' collaboration with the delegitimised PS regime. Just as the participation of the opposition parties in the government spread dissatisfaction, the support of the marabouts and Sufi orders for Diouf and the PS was subjected to negative appraisal. The increased access to information and ongoing debates also made it easier for the population to see that material interests underlie the practices of some marabouts (Diop and Diouf 1990). The followers increasingly questioned the *ndigël* of the marabouts in favour of the PS and a debate on the appropriateness of political *ndigëls* and the separation of politics and religion followed.

## **Changed practices and renegotiated relations in the religious field**

The society-induced pressure for change was felt by both political and religious authorities in Senegal (Villalon 2004). Just as the popular pressure for change pushed forward the process of political liberalisation when the crisis of legitimacy of the PS regime deepened, the marabouts also had to relate to the prevalent dissatisfaction when their followers changed their attitudes and discourse. This constituted the first step of a renegotiation of the relations between marabouts and followers; the basis of the Senegalese social contract. Faced with the threat of losing authority from their collaboration with the delegitimised PS, the marabouts changed at least their overt political practices, such as issuing electoral *ndigëls*. The alteration process within the religious field was affected by the general context of transformations in Senegalese society – political liberation, increased access to information and religious debates – and was manifested in shifts in religious organisation and internal dispute in the Sufi orders.

### ***Changes in religious organisation***

The alteration processes within the religious field involved changes in religious organisation. The urban *dahiras* became increasingly important in organising the relations between



marabouts and followers due to increased urbanisation and the recession in rural areas leading to a decrease in *daaras* (Cruise O'Brien 1988). Although it was claimed that urbanisation would weaken the followers' ties to their marabouts, due to their geographic separation and reduced pressure (Cruise O'Brien 1971), it is now evident that urban and international followers keep their religious conviction and contact with the marabout (Beck 1996, Cruise O'Brien 1975). The *dahiras* of today are to be found in cities and rural areas of Senegal, as well as in international diaspora communities (Babou 2002, Rosander 1997d, 2006, Selboe 2001). There has also developed a new type of mass-movement *dahira*; large organisations which mobilise large numbers of followers and direct a great range of activities. These have expressed the popular dissatisfaction and thus challenged the established politico-religious system of Senegal, including their own orders (Villalon 2007).

The Dahiratoul Mourstarchidine wal Moustarchidaty (DMWM), or Moustarchidine-movement is one such mass-movement *dahira* (Diouf 1996, Villalon 2004). It was established by the marabout Cheikh Tidiane Sy in 1978 and is now led by his son Moustapha Sy. The movement arranges a wide range of educational and social activities and constituted a new hybrid Sufi-model through combining reformist themes with its Sufi-order basis. However, the Moustarchidine-movement has also criticised marabouts and parts of the Sufi system and openly challenged the PS regime, and so came to constitute an important political movement when this helped secure many followers, particularly among the young (Creevey and Vengroff 1997, Diouf 1996, Villalon 1995, 2007, Villalon and Kane 1998). The movement has also been a part of the internal competition of the Sy branch of the Tidjani order, as it has arranged activities aimed to strengthen Cheikh Tidiane's position in the family and the inside struggle for followers and leadership (Villalon 1999).

The Mouride *dahira* Hizbout-Tarqiya also developed into a religious mass movement, although it started as the local *dahira* of the Mouride students at the University of Dakar in 1975 (Piga 2002, Villalon 2007). Drawing on reformist themes, the movement was able to attract and mobilise the young, questioning the politico-religious establishment and modernising the *dahira* model (Villalon 2004). Through attaining general popular support and vast wealth in contributions from followers, the movement gained an important position in the Mouride order. It took on responsibilities related to the development of Touba and organisation of the Maggal, and created an online database on the order, made radio broadcasts and published religious texts (Guèye 2001, 2002, Villalon 1999). However, the

Hizbout-Tarqiya also challenged the logic of authority and of practice of succession of the Mouride order, when the leader of the movement, Atou Diagne, questioned the inherited authority of the younger generations of marabouts. He claimed that all followers had the potential to become marabouts; it was the fidelity to the *khalife* which was decisive and not membership of the Mbacké family. This led to conflict with the sons of the *khalife* and a crisis at the Maggal of 1997, which caused the Hizbout-Tarqiya to lose the recognition of the *khalife*. Thus, Diagne was forced to publicly apologise and to recognise the leadership of the Mbacké family to obtain the public pardon of the *khalife* and regain an accepted position in the order (Beck 2001, Villalon 1999, 2007).

### ***Popular debate on the political authority of marabouts and the possible separation between political and religious spheres***

Religious followers expressed disappointment with the close collaboration of their religious guides, the marabouts, with the discredited PS regime and debated their political *ndigëls*. Thus, changes in the religious field also involved the changed attitudes, discourse and practices of followers and the consequential renegotiation of relations to their marabouts. The discontent of religious followers with electoral orders was first expressed in 1983. The critique was more explicitly articulated in 1988, when the Mouride leader Abdou Lahat gave an unusually harsh *ndigël* before the elections; saying that those who failed to vote for Diouf and the PS betrayed the message and teaching of the founder Amadou Bamba (Beck 2001, Diaw and Diouf 1998:138). This *ndigël* and its serious tone were very unpopular among many Mouride followers, and Lahat's popularity and reputation were weakened (Cruise O'Brien 2002c). It is believed that numerous followers, particularly the urban youth, refrained from voting or ignored the election *ndigël* completely (Schaffer 1998, Young and Kante 1992). However, for the Diouf regime, it was not only the actual votes resulting from the *ndigël* that were important. The tradition that all followers voted in conformity with the orders of their marabout made it possible to rig the election(s) without questions being posed in the same degree about the PS's overwhelming victory (Beck 1996). Lahat's *ndigël* provoked discussion and disagreement also within the leadership of the order (Selboe 2001) and his nephew, Khadim Mbacké, criticised the absolute form of the order and made an oppositional *ndigël* in favour of Wade. Only a few days later he was forced to publicly apologise due to pressure from the leadership of the movement (Beck 1996). However, the debate that flared among followers on the correctness of election *ndigëls* and the political authority of marabouts only

increased further throughout the 1990s.

Discursive changes within the religious field became apparent when the population as followers seemed increasingly to distinguish between political and religious identities (Beck 1996) and developed alternative interpretations of political *ndigels* as recommendations rather than orders (Cruise O'Brien 2002c). Increasingly, the legitimacy of political orders and the political wisdom and authority of marabouts were questioned (Beck 2001, 2008). The population discarded the preferences of their marabouts more openly, and the discussion of election *ndigëls* intensified prior to the 1993 election, even if none of the leaders made explicit voting orders (Villalon 1994, 2004). Through these debates, the doxic truths of established practices in the religious field also were questioned and confronted with alternative discourses on *ndigëls*. There seemed to be an increasing tendency among followers to distinguish between political and religious *ndigëls*, and to define the political *ndigëls* as inappropriate. This, along with the separation between the spiritual and temporal spheres of their lives, made it possible for the population as followers to legitimate their political disagreement with their marabouts and to vote according to individual conviction. It is vital to stress that there were no universal trends within the orders or massive agreement among followers on these issues, however. Many followers still respected all *ndigëls* even if they were negative towards political *ndigëls*, and the idea of the separation between the religious and political spheres of the life of followers probably had a stronger hold in urban areas, where the political engagement and *ndigëls* of marabouts had been debated and criticised to a greater degree (Beck 2008, Cruise O'Brien 1992, Selboe 2001, Villalon 1995, 1999).

In my previous work, I found that these changed attitudes and discourses are signs of alterations in the perceptions of the Senegalese population of the relations between politics and religion (Selboe 2001). Drawing on and extending to all the orders in Senegal Beck's (1996) concept of 'modern mouridism', where Mouride followers differentiate between a religious sphere where the authority of the marabouts is indisputable and a political sphere where the followers may act according to personal interests without threatening their identity as pious followers (Beck 1996:37), the analysis above may indicate that the changes in the religious field are signs of a new and negotiated 'modern Senegalese Sufi-Islam'. Indeed, the debates and changes constituted a threat to the credibility and political authority of the marabouts and a lasting challenge to the political *ndigël*, but did not indicate a weakened religious identity. The followers managed to formulate the critique in a way that did not harm

the founders and original core of the orders. Despite the opposition to the political *ndigël* the followers kept strong ties to and respect for their marabouts as religious guides; almost no follower would ignore a religious *ndigël* from her or his marabout or *khalife générale* (Selboe 2001). The renegotiation of the relations between marabouts and followers, and the constraint of their authority in the political field, made it possible for the population when voting to act no longer only as followers, but also as citizens (Selboe 2001).

The new attitudes, practices and discourses of religious followers entail that the power and authority of marabouts are not as uncontested or automatic as they once were. Personal qualities, piety, ascetism and knowledge of the Koran became more important for the reputation and attraction of marabouts. In addition, followers differentiate among the religious authorities; those who deserve and enjoy great respect and power against opportunists who abuse their position and family in the battle for material resources and political power (Mbacké 2005). This has led to the idea in Senegalese society, which is known by both marabouts and followers, that a good and pious marabout is not occupied with politics or material resources, but is content to concentrate on his religious and spiritual role (Selboe 2001). Thus, as followers changed their practices, discourse and attitudes to renegotiate their relations to their marabouts, the religious authorities had to respond, and many changed their political practices. The result was renegotiated relations between marabouts and followers, that also had implications for the social contract (Villalon 1994, 1995).

### ***Changes in the political practices of marabouts***

Knowing that the loyalty of their followers was conditional (Cruise O'Brien 1992, Magassouba 1985) and finding that their religious authority also needs legitimation to be upheld, most marabouts stopped supporting the delegitimised PS regime. In the face of losing their great symbolic power, the important marabouts at least apparently withdrew from the national political field and abstained from issuing voting orders prior to elections.

After the 1988 elections, when Lahat gave the strong *ndigël* in favour of Diouf, none of the Sufi order leaders have issued explicit election *ndigëls* to their followers as it was obvious both to followers and marabouts that they constituted a threat to the credibility of *khalifes* and their favourable position. Indeed, most marabouts recognised that they needed to avoid public political activity in order to maintain the recognition and respect of their followers (Mbacké

2005, Villalon 1994, 1995). The new Mouride *khalife*, Serigne Saliou, replacing Lahat after his death in 1989, took a radically different position on political activity than his predecessor (Audrain 2004). He never actively participated in politics, or made statements and *ndigëls* in relation to any of the elections during his reign (Quinn 2003). Demonstrating that he had no intention of taking sides in relation to the politically divided followers, he gained a reputation as an important and pious Sufi guide with great integrity, not willing to be used or co-opted by politicians longing for his power and position (Beck 1996, Selboe 2001). Indeed, his silence at the 1993 elections was decisive to the political autonomy of the population as religious followers, as most of the other marabouts of the Mouride order respected and followed the silence of their leader. The leader of the Sy branch of the Tidjaniya order, Mansour Sy, did not issue a *ndigël* either, and all the significant marabouts acted in the same way, recognising the necessity to take the pressure from their followers into account (Gellar 2005, Selboe 2001, Villalon 2007). When the marabout Ibrahima Niasse before the 1993 elections stated that he was a friend of and would vote for Diouf, he stressed that his statement was not an *ndigël* to his followers and that they were free to vote according to their own conviction (Beck 1996).

The new discourse of the Sufi followers made the marabouts face the possibility of losing followers or being subject to their discontent if they continued the established practices and patterns of interactions. Along with the influence from reformist Islam and internal disagreement within orders, the discursive changes compelled most marabouts to pursue and accentuate their spiritual authority through withdrawing from the public political field (Beck 1996, Selboe 2001, Villalon 1999). This had an affect on the relations between the political and religious authorities, as the PS regime could no longer depend upon the stated support of the most important marabouts and one would assume that they no longer gave material benefits in exchange.

The Sufi orders and their marabouts, for their part, were no longer as dependent upon the state, as they had used the possibilities from the former collaboration and exchanges wisely, to build up a relatively sound and independent economic base. This made them less dependent upon the political elite and freer to withdraw from their former alliance. They now have large incomes from the contributions of followers and from their position as great entrepreneurs in economic fields like agriculture, transport, real estate and trade to fall back on. In addition, the socio-economic problems had weakened the capacity of the regime to mobilise electoral

support through distribution of resources to their network of clients and supporters, and there was thus not the same possibility to offer benefits to the marabouts either. However, the economic limitations did not stop the regime from continuing the material assistance to marabouts, despite their withdrawal from overt political activity and from making declarations of support or explicit *ndigëls* (Beck 1996, Selboe 2001).

The crisis of legitimacy led the politicians and the state to continue the material and symbolic support of the marabouts and orders, as one of several strategies to keep their position of power and to strengthen their legitimacy with the population (Beck 1996, Selboe 2001). The PS regime still donated resources like land, seeds and wells, in an attempt to be associated with the prestige and authority of the marabouts and orders. Serigne Saliou received a vast area of land just before becoming *khalife*, and today a great agricultural project, Khelcom, is run on the declassified land donated by the state. It is run by over ten *daaras* and through seasonal help from *dahiras*<sup>5</sup> (Selboe 2001). Politicians continued courting marabouts for their political support, or at least their neutrality (Beck 1996). Indeed, the PS led a conscious policy towards the marabouts that pulled out from the political field and simultaneously also sought the support of the more politically active marabouts (Diop and Diouf 1990).

The withdrawal of the more influential marabouts from the national political scene gave opportunities for those marabouts who wanted to engage politically to benefit from the need of the PS regime for maraboutic support. Their political activity demonstrates how marabouts can not only be attentive to the wishes of their followers, but also must relate to the logic of their order or religious family. Each new generation of marabouts increases the competition for followers and for a central position within the orders (Diaw and Diouf 1998, Diop et al. 2000, Villalon 1993, 2004, 2007). In the context of such internal struggles, it has often been the younger and more peripheral marabouts, with nothing to lose but a lot to gain, who engaged in politics to gain access to resources from the state, and possibly experience personal enrichment, more followers or a stronger position in the order (Selboe 2001, Villalon 1999).

The PS regime tried to benefit from the marabouts willing to collaborate both to raise support and stay in power and to increase the disagreement and division within the orders to weaken

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<sup>5</sup> See newspaper *L'Info* 1/12/2000.

their position (Diop and Diouf 1990). Their distribution of resources led most active marabouts to give their support to the PS. Few marabouts issued *ndigëls* for oppositional parties, because these could not provide the same material benefits as the PS. Beck (1996) claims that the support of some marabouts for the opposition in the 1990s was planned and allowed in the actual marboutic families, as this secured political access if the opposition seized power. Thus, it does not differ from her view of how the majority of the electorate vote; on the basis of who or what party may secure access to state resources for them (Beck 1999). However, the politically active marabouts were not well received by the population, who saw them as trivial opportunists illegitimately using their descent for their own personal profit (Diop and Diouf 1990). Their practices were unfavourable to the order and contributed to weakening of the marabouts' authority in general, as the followers were discontented, saw them as cynical and claimed that it sometimes was hard to distinguish a marabout from a politician (Selboe 2001, Villalon 1999). The political engagement of the younger and less significant marabouts thus provoked criticism from both followers and their own Sufi order when they acted and pronounced themselves in contradiction with the wishes and that of their own religious leader. The *khalife générale* is not only the superior leader of the followers, but also all the other marabouts of the order are his followers and should thus not act in disagreement with this practice (Mbacké 2005). The different practices of marabouts made the followers more attentive to their contradictory interests and the lack of unity in the orders. In addition, the negative attitude of the population towards the politically active marabouts also had consequences for the PS regime who solicited them; their legitimacy was further diminished. When the contact between the marabouts and the state was weakened, this affected the state's link to the population, and so the PS system was ever more dependent on the inner network of clients to remain in power. The PS used their clients in various state institutions to uphold their position, for instance, through manipulating the implementation of democratic reforms which had the potential to challenge the monopoly of power of the PS (Beck 1996, Creevey et al. 2005, Selboe 2001). However, the renegotiated relations between followers and marabouts and the process of democratisation and political reform created changes in practices and discourses which eventually manifested the loss of legitimacy and authority of the PS regime when the opposition candidate Abdoulaye Wade won the presidential election in 2000.

## A renegotiated social contract and the change of regime in 2000

Prior to and through the presidential elections of February/March 2000, the population both as citizens and religious followers, demonstrated their more and more pronounced rejection of the PS regime and possible *ndigëls* of marabouts (Diop et al. 2000). Most people claimed that they would vote according to personal political conviction and believed that their marabouts would not issue a *ndigël*. However, if an important and usually silent marabout would make a serious *ndigël*, like warning against voting for a particular candidate rather than directly promoting one, it would probably be listened to and followed by followers who believed in his visions for the future (Selboe 2001). The separation of political and religious spheres by an increasing number of followers and their redefinition of religious duties no longer to include following political *ndigëls* or the more or less pronounced political preferences of their marabouts (Beck 1996, 2001, Selboe 2001), was covered and encouraged by the free press before the elections (Audrain 2004). Various newspapers wrote that the situation in Senegal was changed, and claimed that abiding by a political *ndigël* was no longer relevant to the relation between marabout and follower<sup>6</sup>. The religious expert groups of the opposition coalition also publicly rejected political *ndigëls*, holding them not to have religious value and claiming the election to be irrelevant to the relations between followers and marabouts; there was thus no duty for the population to follow eventual election *ndigëls*.

As the leaders of the Sufi orders had adjusted to the situation and acknowledged the society-induced pressure for change, none of them made explicit *ndigëls* prior to the presidential election. Particularly the Mouride *khalife* Serigne Saliou demonstrated his distance from politics (Coulon 1999). He avoided receiving the governmental delegation during the Maggal in 1999 and banned all political activity in Touba ahead of the presidential election, partly as a result of the conflict and clashes emerging at a political meeting in November the same year<sup>7</sup> (Selboe 2001). One of the few marabouts issuing an election *ndigël* was the Mouride marabout Modou Kara who declared his support to Diouf and ordered his followers to vote for him. He met strong reactions. Talla Sylla, one of his most important followers, who is also the leader of the political party Jef-Jel, publicly expressed that he would not obey this *ndigël*.<sup>8</sup> His other followers also expressed their resistance at a meeting in Dakar on 31 December

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<sup>6</sup> See newspapers *L'Info* 7/12/99 and *Le Matin* 13/12/99.

<sup>7</sup> See newspapers *WalFadjiri*, *Sud Quotidien* and *Le Matin* 30/11/99, and magazine *Nouvel Horizon* 17/9/99.

<sup>8</sup> See newspaper *Le Matin* 18/12/99.



1999; each time Kara mentioned Diouf or other persons in the PS, the audience of followers booed in a concert of whistling lasting for several minutes (Audrain 2004, Diop et al. 2000, Selboe 2001, Villalon 2007). This would have been an unimaginable reaction from followers in the past, but exemplifies the strong popular pressure for change within the political and religious fields. Kara also had reactions from the leading marabouts of the order on several occasions (Selboe 2001). When he compared himself to the deceased *khalife* Abdou Lahat, offering his and his followers' support to Diouf if they got the same concessions as Lahat, he faced strong reactions both from Lahat's family and many Mouride followers and was forced to make a public apology<sup>9</sup> (Selboe 2001). Before the second round of the presidential election, Kara was again in the media with the story that the founder of mouridism, Amadou Bamba, had come to him in a dream and told him that Diouf would win the elections and with the advice that the followers thus should vote for him. Again, he received reactions from followers and the leaders of the order, and again he had to withdraw and excuse his statement<sup>10</sup> (Selboe 2001).

The Moustarchidine movement mobilised strongly before the presidential elections. In 1998 the political party *Partie de l'Unité et du Rassemblement* (PUR) was established and the Moustarchidine members or followers were informed about the electoral process and encouraged to register as voters (Selboe 2001, Villalon 2004, 2007). The well-organised structure and the number of potential votes gave them political force. The movement was also represented in much of Senegal for the audit of the election lists and distribution of election cards and had the aim to have representatives present in all voting offices in Senegal. The leader of the movement Moustapha Sy, launched his candidature for the presidential election, but shortly afterwards withdrew (Selboe 2001). Prior to the first round of the election, Moustapha Sy encouraged the followers to vote according to their own conviction<sup>11</sup>, but before the second round of the election there were signs of disagreement within the leadership. The general secretary of the PUR, Khalifa Diouf, declared over the radio that his party would not support Diouf, Cheikh Tidiane Sy declared his support of Diouf (Villalon 2007) and Moustapha Sy remained silent. The press stressed in retrospect that the followers had voted according to their own preferences, and that the first appeal and later silence of the

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<sup>9</sup> See newspapers *L'Info* 26/11/99 and 3/12/99, and *Le Matin* 2/12/99.

<sup>10</sup> See newspaper *WalFadjiri* 14/3/00.

<sup>11</sup> See newspapers *WalFadjiri*, *Sud Quotidien* and *Le Matin* 26/2/00.

leader and his son were more influential than the orders of the religious guide and father<sup>12</sup>.

Diouf and several of the presidential candidates called on numerous important marabouts before the election in the hope of support, and they all used religious and Islamic symbols in their political discourse. The candidates included not only Wade from the PDS, but also Ka of the *Union pour le Renouveau Démocratique* (URD) and Niasse of the *Alliance des forces de progrès* (AFP), both former centrally placed PS politicians (Galvan 2001). Diouf visited and courted both the more reserved marabouts and those more active in securing support for him (Selboe 2001, Villalon 2004); from March to the start of December in 1999 he met over 90 marabouts.<sup>13</sup> Representatives of the government also visited Khelcom, the *daaras* and agricultural project of Serigne Saliou, in an attempt to create an alliance<sup>14</sup>. This effort did not help Diouf, however, as all the leaders and most important marabouts of the Sufi orders remained quiet, and the followers mostly ignored the political preferences of the few marabouts that were politically active.

Despite the partial control of PS over various state institutions, the lack of support from the marabouts and the continued pressure from society, which had already resulted in political reform, contributed to the fall of the PS and Diouf when Abdoulaye Wade was declared the winner of the second round of the presidential elections of 2000 with 58% of the vote (Diop et al. 2000).

### ***Hopes and expectations resulting from the Alternance***

When Wade, supported by the oppositional coalition *Front pour l'Alternance* (FAL), won the presidential elections and Diouf stepped down, the political stagnation felt by the population was gone (Diop et al. 2000, Villalon 2004, 2007). This first change of regime in the last forty years of PS rule entailed great hopes and expectations for real political changes, a democratic consolidation (Mbow 2008) and improvements with regard to the socio-economic crisis (Diop 2006). The renegotiation of the social contract (Cruise O'Brien 1992) led to this successful democratic transition (Selboe 2001). The transition was pushed forward by continued national and international pressure that led to liberalisation and electoral reform, and was made possible through the oppositional coalition (Creevey et al. 2005, Vengroff and Magala 2001,

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<sup>12</sup> See newspaper *L'Info* 27/3/00.

<sup>13</sup> See newspaper *Sud Quotidien* 9/12/99.

<sup>14</sup> See newspaper *WalFadjiri* 1/12/99.

Vengroff and Mozaffar 2002). A strong citizen mobilisation, particularly among the urban youth, and the absence of electional *ndigëls* from important marabouts were also of importance for the change of regime to materialise (Beck 2008, Galvan 2001, Gellar 2005).

The presidential election of 2000 was followed by a national referendum in January 2001 which established a new republic and made it possible to dissolve the National Assembly, where the majority of seats was still controlled by the PS. A period of rule by presidential decree followed, until the legislative elections in April 2001 consolidated the *Alternance* and secured the complete transfer of political power from the PS to the PDS leading the *Alternance* coalition (Creevey et al. 2005, Galvan 2001). This tendency was reproduced also in the local elections of 2002. As the aim of *sopi*, or change, was achieved, and the discourse and electoral promises of the new regime indicated a new politics different from the established practices of the PS, the Senegalese population expected and aspired to real improvements in their living conditions and democratic politics. This marked the ambiance also in the neighbourhood of Colobane in Dakar in 2002. Despite the general popular distrust of politicians and party politics, the change of regime and the discursive and practical transformations in political and religious fields of Senegalese society led to hope and optimism among local inhabitants for their interest and needs to be taken into account.



## 5. The neighbourhood of Colobane and the inhabitants' multi-activity in network politics

This chapter serves as a short introduction to the neighbourhood of Colobane and the local political space of the inhabitants' multi-activity in network politics.

### Colobane

Colobane is a popular neighbourhood in central Dakar. It is an administrative unit and one of three areas constituting the *commune d'arrondissement* of Gueule Tapée, Fass, Colobane. In 2002, the neighbourhood had 11,807 registered inhabitants (ANSD 2007). At the time, the resident population of Senegal was approximately 9.9 million, with 2.2 million in the *région* of Dakar (ANSD 2006).

The neighbourhood of Colobane was created in 1939/40 when the French colonial authorities moved part of the original Lebou<sup>15</sup> population from what is now the city centre of Dakar in order to extend the city.<sup>16</sup> A Lebou *pinth*, local community unit, was divided in three, and one part relocated to Colobane.<sup>17</sup> Whole Lebou families and their wooden houses were moved there, and came to compose the main part of the neighbourhood, called Colobane Khock. Upon their arrival, a structure of streets and a mosque was constructed, and water points were installed on central corners. The allocation of lots to particular families had been determined by the colonial authorities before they performed the transfer. Colobane was established in a desolate area; there were only a few villages in the bush, no school or other buildings, between the new neighbourhood and the area which is now the city centre of Dakar. Thus, the new inhabitants saw it as wilderness. According to Faye and Thioub (2003), the relocation of the autochthonous Lebou villages, and the confinement of migrants, to remote and precarious areas outside of the city involved a social marginalisation and construction of poverty-stricken

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<sup>15</sup> The Lebou are one of the ethnic groups of Senegal. They were the people inhabiting the Cap Vert peninsula (now the greater Dakar area) prior to colonialisation (Sylla 1992, Diouf 2001). They speak Wolof and are often reckoned as a sub-group of the Wolof (Diouf 1994).

<sup>16</sup> The description of the establishment of the neighbourhood is mainly based on the accounts of elders who experienced the arranged move from what is now the city centre of Dakar.

<sup>17</sup> According to interviews, the rest of the Khock *pinth* was later moved to the neighbourhoods of Fann and Gueule Tapée.

localities by the colonial authorities. When established, Colobane was constituted by two main areas; Colobane Khock and Sakora Badiane. Sakora Badiane was inhabited by a mixture of Lebous and ‘foreigners’, for instance people who had worked on the railway from Dakar to Bamako and were immigrants from other regions of Senegal and other countries of West Africa. In the beginning, the two areas of the neighbourhood were rather separated, but over time close bonds developed between the inhabitants of Colobane Khock and Sakora Badiane through intermarriage and co-existence. As the neighbourhood was established, the two areas got each their mosque and *chef de quartier*, the representative of the inhabitants in relation to the colonial authorities.

These intermediaries were among the local notables of the neighbourhood, who were mainly composed of the heads of the original families of the neighbourhood, particularly the large Lebou families, besides the imams and *chefs de quartier*. The notables were regarded as legitimate spokespersons of the inhabitants, and enjoyed great recognition. They worked to solve the problems of the neighbourhood, and particularly the Lebou notables were important links not only to the colonial administration, but also the Lebou republic.<sup>18</sup> Khock is one of the twelve local units of the Lebou state, and the *chef de quartier* of Colobane Khock among the authorities of the state (Sylla 1992). Thus, the position of *chef de quartier* had in this case its origin in the pre-colonial state of the Lebou, but was continued under the colonial period. Tall (1998), however, argues that the position was established by the French to decrease the influence and power of the traditional elites. In this case, the position coincides with that of the Lebou state institution and it was continued and appropriated by the local notables of Colobane under colonial rule. This tendency of representatives of local notables and aristocratic Lebou families to be elected into the positions of *chef de quartier* is confirmed by Piga (2002). Despite being moved against their will, the local Lebou notables in Colobane recall good relations with the colonial authorities and argue that the power and position of the Lebou gave them bargaining power in relation to the colonial authorities which had to co-operate and make concessions. As the Lebou were the main landowners of the Cap Vert peninsula, now Dakar area, they had a certain influence with the colonial authorities, with whom they negotiated and collaborated about various economic issues such as commercial transactions and land access (Abdoul 2005, Sylla 1992). The political influence of the Lebou in Dakar politics continued also after independence in 1960, although weakened (Diouf 2001,

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<sup>18</sup> The Lebou collectivity is governed by a republic, of which the *Serigne Ndakaru* (Diouf 2001, Sylla 1992) is the president. Due to internal conflicts and politicisation, their institutions seem somewhat weakened.

Hesseling 1985). Local notables in Colobane reveal that the Lebou community still has land rights in the city of Dakar, involving certain privileges like taxes and rent. This has led to a continuation of disputes over land rights since colonial times (Faye and Thioub 2003, Piga 2002).

Under the post-colonial PS regime, the number of *chefs de quartier*, or *délégués de quartier* as they later came to be known, increased in Colobane as likewise in Dakar. This was due to the growth of the neighbourhood and population of new areas, as well as the need of the PS to influence local politics (Tall 1998). Through time, the *chefs* and later *délégués de quartier* have been appointed by the local notables and invested by state authorities. They are mainly elderly men, often originating from a big and respected Lebou family, who are deeply respected due to their personal skills, knowledge, age and experience. They are portrayed as competent in leadership and as good representatives. However, the generation of notables present at the establishment of the neighbourhood is dying out; only a few of these original Lebou notables are left in Colobane. These are in their eighties and nineties and most of them are too old to act. There are other elders who have been living in the neighbourhood for a long period of time, but the almost common sense and automatic authority of the first Lebou notables of the neighbourhood is not directly transferred to this generation of elders. They however still enjoy great respect, along with the existing *délégués de quartier* and imams.

Over time, Colobane has grown and developed as Dakar expanded and more Lebous and immigrants came to live in the neighbourhood. Now, this traditional and popular neighbourhood is a densely populated and crowded area of Dakar. This is due to the increasing rural-to-urban migration into Dakar (Antoine, Bocquier, Fall, Guisse and Nanitalamio 1995, Fall 1998) and the neighbourhood's closeness to the city centre. This intense and lively neighbourhood is also rather impoverished, with relatively poor living conditions. There are common problems of unemployment and lack of education. The socio-economic crisis and persistent poverty of Senegal creates poor urban living conditions (Galvan 2001). In Dakar, employment opportunities are limited and decreasing, which leads many into occasional work in the growing informal economy (Fall 1998, Scheld 2007). The general scarcity is visible also in the buildings in Colobane; many are somewhat ramshackle. Some of the original wooden houses or shacks are left, but most are one- or two-storey concrete houses, although a bit decaying. However, there is an increasing tendency of renovation and a couple of apartment buildings have been built where traditional family

houses used to be. These transformations are related to generational changes and modifications in the long residing families and the ever-increasing influx of new inhabitants, but also resulting from a renewed interest in the neighbourhood created by the expansion of Dakar that is situating Colobane in the centre of the city. Still, the neighbourhood and its streets continue to show signs of deprivation and a shortage of resources. The condition of the streets is not good, what used to be tarmaced road in some parts is now sandy and filled with holes. In the rainy season, these give breeding grounds to mosquitoes and the spread of malaria. The disfavoured character of Colobane is also apparent in infrastructural problems, such as the unsatisfactory situation of health care, water and sanitation services and unemployment. This is visible through the rubbish and foul-smelling water in the streets, outbursts of cholera and the general lack of services experienced by the inhabitants, for instance, related to rubbish collection and waste-water disposal. Regular power cuts and breaks in the water supply are also experienced, as for most residents of Dakar (Scheld 2007).

As mentioned, Colobane is a crowded neighbourhood. In addition to people residing in the area, a large number of people enter the neighbourhood each day, due to its position in the centre of Dakar and its function as a crossroads. Colobane is situated by the motorway, it has a bus station and a relatively large market. This makes the neighbourhood filled with and marked by the circulation of people, traffic and goods. At times, it may feel a bit blocked, due to all the *car rapides* (small buses), the general traffic on and off the highway and into the neighbourhood, and the heavy vehicles crossing the Colobane bridge to enter the industrial area near by. The bus station near the motorway is also next to the market, *marché Colobane*, for which the neighbourhood is mainly known. Both the bus station and market contribute to the great influx of people. It is said that one can buy anything at the market in Colobane, and that it is a prime area for theft, sale of drugs, resale of stolen goods and other malpractices. It is also claimed that the market makes the neighbourhood an area favourable to pickpockets and incidents of violence, and so contributes to insecurity for the inhabitants. The proximity of the market thus affects the living conditions in Colobane. Among the benefits are the economic surplus related to the trade and commerce taking place in the market, and the possibility of engaging in different income-generating activities in the informal sector and of buying goods at a good price. There are however also disadvantages like noise, pollution, traffic and waste, as well as insecurity and congestion (Lyons and Snoxell 2005). The market is always expanding and creating problems for the residents, as it is 'eating' into the neighbouring streets and residential areas when merchants put up tables, stalls or more



permanent canteens.

The long planned restoration of the market was started after my fieldwork in Colobane, but is not yet finished. Some of the small shops or stalls, called *cantines*, have merchants installed, but yet the less regulated trade in the streets of the neighbourhood, over small tables or removable cantines, seem to increase. Making a living through informal activities in the market is a strategy of youth moving to Dakar from rural areas (Lyons and Snoxell 2005), and only a few can afford the shops in the new Colobane market. Over the last years also the highway and the bridge over it, as well as the bus station near by, have been reconstructed.

## **Multi-activity and the importance of social networks**

The change of regime in 2000, and the subsequent legislative elections of 2001 and local elections of 2002, established the position of power of the earlier oppositional coalition led by the PDS. It gave hope of a politics where the interests and needs of the population would be taken into account, and the inhabitants of Colobane had expectations of improved socio-economic and political opportunities. However, in the late autumn of 2002, when I started fieldwork, the neighbourhood was still characterised by a lack of resources and poverty, and the inhabitants seemed not to have experienced much change yet. Unemployment is high in the area, young people strive to find jobs, and a considerable part of each family does not have any income at all. Many individuals and families struggle in their daily lives to generate the money and resources for basic needs and everyday expenses. Others have trouble in periods of high expenditures, for instance, when several bills or extraordinary costs appear at the same time. Ceremonies, the medical costs and prescriptions following illness, and the charges of electricity and water become a burden in addition to daily living expenses.

In this context, the inhabitants of the neighbourhood mobilise in a number of ways. They engage in multi-activity in their everyday life as a strategy for survival and accumulation of needed resources. The vital element is social capital; social networks of personal relations and contacts in various societal fields. As in network politics at the national level, the nurturing of personal relations is vital also in local political practices. Thus, in Colobane, personal relations and social networks connect formal and informal spheres and state and society,

either through direct contact between individuals or through intermediaries. Just as in national politics, the overlapping networks are characterised by both horizontal and vertical contact. Networks are arenas for contact among the elites, between elite and more marginalised actors, and for relations among the regular inhabitants of the neighbourhood. All actors do actively use and mobilise in network politics.

The residents of Colobane in their everyday life and activities hence invest in building social relations and draw upon a range of different social, religious and political institutions and authorities to secure needed resources in a situation of scarcity. They engage to secure their own situation and that of their family, as well as to improve the general situation and living conditions of the neighbourhood and to promote more general political interests. Their social networks include members of their extended family and close personal relations and extend to friends and neighbours. These are vital to secure help in a difficult situation. However, the residents of Colobane also engage in a number of other personal relations and networks of contacts. They are members of various collective organisations, such as religious associations and women's groups, which in addition to their original functions also serve as arenas for building friendships and social relationships. These associations are often governed by a logic of solidarity and mutual help among members, although they are not devoid of conflicts or always open to everyone. This logic still constitutes a kind of social-security mechanism for members, and also seems to mark the neighbourhood and its social organisation as a whole. On the other hand, engagement in network politics also involves nurturing individual relations with resourceful persons and local authorities in various societal fields and institutions.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the state with its institutions and representatives is an obvious goal of solicitations, as it is a base of resources. Similar to national politics, local network politics entail struggles over and negotiations for an exchange of material and symbolic resources between politicians and inhabitants. The political elites may use their position in a political party or the local state to provide needed economic assistance to inhabitants in exchange for symbolic support and maybe votes that would enhance their standing. The tradition of remuneration of supporters and clients is found both in national and local politics. Thus, these established practices make individual inhabitants in Colobane approach individual politicians, directly or through intermediaries, for economic support. Also religious and traditional authorities like the imam and the *délégué de quartier* receive requests for help, and are expected to provide food, shelter or some money for prescribed medications.

Such a logic of relations and exchanges can furthermore be found with particular individuals or patrons in the neighbourhood who are in the economic and social position to help neighbours and friends. Through engagement in a *dahira*, a religious follower also gets the opportunity to contact his or her marabout to ask for needed assistance.

In the local network politics, the participants struggle and negotiate access to various types of required resources. Although the logic is the same and the key issue is social capital in the form of personal relations and a network of contacts, the stakes are different for various actors. The elites engage to gain political supporters, accumulate economic resources and/or to recreate and improve the authority and legitimacy they have as leaders. The more marginalised inhabitants of Colobane engage in multi-activity in these networks as part of their strategies for survival and everyday coping with expenditures. The building and nurturing of social relations, and the related continuous negotiations for resources, are a central part of the political practices of people, both the marginalised and the elites, and those in between searching to improve their positions and conditions.

Thus, a multi-activity in network politics marks the local political space of Colobane. There is a plurality of relations, practices, discourses and arrangements used by inhabitants to secure their interests. These involve both collaboration and conflicts. Despite inequalities and power differences, all actors creatively use and try to negotiate their personal contacts and social relations to increase possibilities and promote their interests. The resulting practices often involve an exchange of symbolic and material resources and go across religious, economic, social and political fields, which are connected in various ways. This amalgam of practices, struggles and networks, even if structured by and structuring the local political space of Colobane, also has national and international scope. The following six chapters of this dissertation analyse the network politics of Colobane and the plurality of local politics, and show how they intersect social fields and involve formal, informal and private spheres. The analysis is divided into the three analytical categories of; the local political field, the local religious field and associational life in the neighbourhood. This entails a simplification of the complexity of the local political space and practices. However, their overlappings and blurred boundaries are recognised and indicated throughout the analysis.



## 6. *Délégués de quartier* as traditional mediators of local state-society relations

The *délégués de quartier* serve as intermediaries in local state-society relations, and are representatives of both the inhabitants of the neighbourhood and the local state. As explained in chapter 5, the position of *délégué de quartier* has pre-colonial origins, from an institutionalised position of representation under the Lebou republic, the *chef de pinth*, or *quartier* (Sylla 1992). During the colonial period, it was appropriated to the new context. When the neighbourhood of Colobane was established, the population was represented by two *chefs de quartier* who served as their spokespersons in relations with the colonial administration. After independence, when the PS monopolised the Senegalese postcolonial state, the number of intermediaries multiplied and the name was changed to *délégué de quartier* in 1986 (Tall 1998). This increase of *délégués de quartier* was related to the expansion of neighbourhoods and inhabitants, but was also politically motivated (Tall 1998). It was part of the strategy of the PS regime to strengthen its power and control in local areas, and so to keep its political domination in a situation of rising political crisis. Thus, the *délégués de quartier* in Colobane may have been dependent upon political contacts to obtain their position. However, the *délégués de quartier* are also closely related to the traditional authority of the notables, including the authorities of the local religious field, the imams of the local mosques. As the *délégués* are reckoned as both representing and being local notables, their position has been affected by a change of generation among the Lebou notables of the neighbourhood.

During my fieldwork in 2002–2003, the situation of the *délégués de quartier* in Colobane was extraordinary and the future of the position seemed rather uncertain. There were only a couple of functioning *délégués de quartier* left, in addition to one who was too old and sick to perform his duties. This was due to a generational shift, where most of the *délégués* were deceased and had not been replaced. In this situation of a greatly reduced number of *délégués de quartier* in the neighbourhood, the relatives of the deceased *délégués* – their sons, wives or nephews – took on some of their official tasks, for instance, the issuing of official papers such as residence certificates. The appointment of new *délégués de quartier* has been delayed, maybe due to both the generational change affecting the notables and indecisiveness from the state. In a situation where the earlier, almost automatic legitimacy of the Lebou dignitaries who established the neighbourhood is not unquestionably transferred to their successors, the

new generations and increasing number of tenants do not seem to use the *délégués* to the same extent as was customary, and the representatives of the *commune d'arrondissement* fail to collaborate with the *délégués*, the prospects for the position of the *délégués de quartier* in Colobane are uncertain. The personal characteristics and individual practices of the *délégués* will become even more decisive, as the population still depend on them to perform their official duties ordered by the administration and to provide important informal assistance.

## **At the interface between the local population and state institutions**

### ***The délégués de quartier as state representatives***

The *délégués de quartier* serve as representatives of the inhabitants of Colobane in relation to the state. They are also seen as local representatives of the state administration, as they are paid by the municipality of Dakar and have certain official functions. By the decree 86-761 of 30 June 1986, the *délégués de quartier* are representatives of the administration and assistants of the mayor of Dakar (Tall 1998). Among the formal tasks demanded by the administration is the production of documentation needed as the basis for official papers issued by registry offices. The *délégués* are witnesses during wedding ceremonies in local mosques, where they are responsible for controlling identification papers and registering the marriage. The resulting temporary marriage certificate must be presented at the registry office of the *commune d'arrondissement* for an official version to be issued. Most importantly, the *délégués* are authorised to provide residence certificates which are needed for admission to local schools, obtaining an official proof of residence, a national id-card, a driver's licence or a passport. Due to these administrative functions, the inhabitants contact their *délégué de quartier* to obtain the papers they need.

The *délégués de quartier* of Colobane also have informal tasks which are the result of historic or routinised practices and the needs of state bodies. This means taking over certain responsibilities and tasks that should be done by a well-functioning state. An example of their unofficial duties is conflict resolution. They are involved in regulating and resolving problems and conflicts of both an inter-personal and economic character. The *délégués* are approached by individuals to help reconcile neighbours, settle disputes among friends and solve family conflicts between spouses, between wives or between generations. They also help to mediate

in financial quarrels between landlords and tenants or within savings groups, and serve as witnesses for tenancy and debt contracts and various juridical statements. There is a custom and practice of solving such issues locally through the *délégués de quartier*, who are often assisted by traditional and religious authorities like the local notables including the imams. The inhabitants turn to the *délégués* when their logic and habits indicate it as the best solution, including when they lack knowledge of, trust in or access to the relevant state agents or administrative procedures. According to Tall (1998), the local population solicit and use local elites like the *délégués* as these are well-known and approachable to them due to their physical and social proximity.

Some inhabitants of Colobane prefer to consult the *délégués* rather than involving the police, who are seen not to hold the same legitimacy or to deserve the same trust as local authorities of various social fields. Hence, the *délégués de quartier* are preferred in such matters. They may call upon the local imams, who possess power and legitimacy due to their position as a religious authority, to help solve disputes. Family representatives and notables are also regularly used in the settlement of conflicts. It is up to the *délégué de quartier* as a moderator to consider what actors to draw upon, and his evaluation may also include taking the problem to the police or the tribunal. Sometimes, it is the responsibility of the *délégué* to take the matter to the police, like when he is responsible for following up a contract of debt and the repayment terms are not respected. In other cases, taking the issue to the police is the decision of the involved parties, but the *délégué de quartier* still serves as a mediator between the police and the parties.

It is not only the *délégués de quartier* who work to settle conflicts locally. The police also ask for issues to be resolved by the *délégués* in the neighbourhood. Police officers directly and indirectly encourage the *délégués* to try to solve problems there first and express that they see them as their representatives or mediators in Colobane. For instance, the *délégués* receive the summons from the police or the tribunal if a complaint is lodged against a person from the neighbourhood. They are also approached by the police for information on local inhabitants and their place of residence. Similarly, the *délégués* may ask the police to ‘pardon’ a summoned person if the incident is not too serious and they manage to resolve it in the neighbourhood. This mutual and informal collaboration reduces the workload of the police and reproduces a system of action shaping practices and procedures regarding such issues. When promoting these practices of cooperation, the police implicitly acknowledge the

*délégués de quartier* and promote their position and authority in the neighbourhood, particularly as intermediaries between the representatives of various state institutions and the inhabitants of Colobane.

### ***The délégué de quartier as a representative of the population and local authority***

#### **Infrastructural and collective problems**

The *délégués de quartier* are seen as representatives of the population and as among the authorities of Colobane, and they serve as the inhabitants' intermediaries in relation to the state. They are approached by the inhabitants regarding the infrastructural and collective problems of the neighbourhood. Due to the history and actual practices of relating to state institutions, the *délégués* are seen as responsible for bringing the problems of the inhabitants and the neighbourhood to the local state administration and the representatives of the *commune d'arrondissement*. In practice, this means receiving the complaints of the population, discussing the issues with the notables and imams of the area, and passing them on to the local government and administration.

In addition, the *délégués* have taken on tasks of control and surveillance of nearby areas in the neighbourhood. One *délégué* always calls on SENELEC (the national electricity company) and the *mairie* (town hall) of the commune to solve the problem when the public lighting does not work or the electricity is cut off. This *délégué* also observes strangers coming into the neighbourhood and sometimes asks them to identify themselves, to prevent them from harming or swindling people. For instance, he has revealed fake price controllers coming to defraud shop owners at several instances. This supervision of the neighbourhood sometimes also involves providing information or heightening people's awareness on various issues, like the system of rubbish collection. In addition, the *délégués* are given tasks like looking after lost children, who are taken to a *délégué's* house to be cared for until the parents are found, often by the action of the *délégué*.

The *délégués* also address the problems of insecurity experienced in their neighbourhood. When they see aggressors or drug dealers they call the police, who unfortunately seldom



respond due to a lack of resources. It is difficult for the *délégués* to handle these problems themselves, as was illustrated by a situation where a *délégué* got into trouble after trying to prevent violence in the street near his house. Seeing a group of vagabonds starting to fight, armed with knives and machetes, the *délégué* went outside and fired a small signal gun into the air to frighten them and to prevent anyone from getting hurt. The men ran away, but two days later the *délégué* received a notice from the police asking him to present his firearms certificate and accusing him of wounding someone. At the police station, he explained the incident and how it was impossible for him to hurt anyone as the gun only makes noise and do not have bullets.

### **The economic challenge of meeting individual requests**

Being a representative of the population as well as a local authority provides the *délégués* with a certain standing. However, their position also involves obligations and responsibilities. In addition to dealing with the collective problems of the neighbourhood, the *délégués* face approaches from individual inhabitants with requests for help with personal difficulties. They are asked for assistance in relation to important ceremonies like baptisms, funerals and marriages, where they participate along with the imam and the notables and provide moral and economic support. Individuals also solicit help to manage everyday expenditures related to food, housing, medical prescriptions and transport. It is part of their multi-activity, one of the strategies and practices characterising the network politics of Colobane.

These solicitations are quite a heavy drain on the *délégués*' monthly wages of 15,000 f.cfa. (approx. 23 euro), as well as their personal economy and the resources of their family, as they do not receive any official funds for helping the inhabitants. All the functioning *délégués* in Colobane at the time of the fieldwork were retired and thus of limited resources, but still helped out as best as they could, either by providing a small amount of money or some rice. Their commitment to help is explained as related to their position and the expectations of the inhabitants of the neighbourhood. One *délégué* says he cannot let them down, even if it is a financial burden for him. In a situation where a *délégué* is not able to help out, he might draw on the notables and imam of a local mosque, which have ways of providing assistance. Some mosques have institutionalised aid systems, like a regular distribution of rice or other resources to poor and vulnerable individuals and families. The *délégués* portray the obligation to help not only as among the tasks of their position, but also as part of their heritage,

socialisation and religion. It is in accordance with the duties of a good Muslim and the traditions of the Lebou (and the neighbourhood and country), as well as their upbringing and experience. As one *délégué* expressed it, all this together makes him wish to and feel obliged to share with and assist his neighbours and to contribute to the well being of the people of Colobane. He explained how he always says yes when someone approaches him for water, even if he ends up struggling to pay the water bill later on. He would be ashamed not to give water, it is common decency for him, even if he knows that some people take advantage of him. He claimed the new generations do not feel the same way; they would help, but decline if they felt it unwarranted or impossible economically.

## **The politics of appointment: whose representative?**

As mentioned above, the *délégués de quartier* have been serving as intermediaries in local state-society relations and are seen as representatives of the inhabitants. They are also seen as local state representatives, owing to their official tasks. When exploring the mechanisms and politics of election and appointment of the *délégués de quartier*, two other actors become evident; the local notables and political parties.

### ***The délégués de quartier as representatives of and belonging to the local notables***

The election and appointment of a *délégué de quartier* does not involve the inhabitants of the neighbourhood directly, but rather the local notables and the municipality of Dakar. As with the *chef de quartier* related to the Lebou institution, it is the notables of Colobane who elect the *délégués de quartier*. Then, the local decision is sent on to the municipality of Dakar where the formal appointment takes place and is registered for the monthly remuneration to be paid. At times, this is a very slow process, one of the *délégués* explained how it took almost two years for his local appointment to be confirmed by decree of the mayor of Dakar and the Minister of Decentralisation. There is some dissent regarding the influence of the local traditional and municipal political authorities on the choice of *délégués de quartier*, and who has the final say.

All the *délégués*, as well as local notables, insist that it is the notables of the neighbourhood who propose and elect the *délégués* through the council of the notables. They present the notables as the real authorities of the neighbourhood, as knowledgeable and capable, and as those who possess the power to appoint or dismiss the *délégués de quartier*. Likewise, when a *délégué* dies, it is the notables who make suggestions for and choose a new *délégué de quartier*, although their decision must be verified by the authorities of Dakar who see to the public investiture. However, this system of election and appointment does not entail any direct involvement of the inhabitants of Colobane at all. This is not particular to the neighbourhood, according to Tall (1998), direct election of *délégués de quartier* is rare. The system however reflects and creates close relations between the notables and the *délégués de quartier*, who are simultaneously part of the local group of notables and their mediator in relation to state representatives.

The *délégués de quartier* are part of and draw upon the local notables in executing their tasks and practising their role and position. As mentioned, they use their authority, power, competence and legitimacy in solving disputes and occasionally when helping with economic problems. One *délégué* declares that it is imperative for him to consult and collaborate with the notables also when working for the general benefit of the neighbourhood. This means that in their relations with state institutions and representatives the *délégués de quartier* signal the problems of the neighbourhood not only as expressed by inhabitants, but also communicate the views, messages and needs of the neighbourhood as discussed and decided by the local notables. The *délégués* meet and socialise with the notables in various arenas. Usually, the local mosque is the main gathering point of the notables, where the *délégué* may be involved in the management of the mosque. They encounter the notables when frequenting the local mosque for personal worship and religious practice, and here they all discuss issues concerning the neighbourhood almost on a daily basis. The mosque is a prime arena for the assimilation of local elites, in the terms of Bayart (1993). In addition to this regular and informal socialising and discussion in local mosques, the council of the notables also hold monthly meetings where the notables from all the different areas of the neighbourhood gather in the big mosque in the area of Parc a Mazout (Friday mosque) to discuss issues related to this mosque and the neighbourhood in general. One of the *délégués de quartier* also arranges a monthly gathering at his place, where structural and collective problems like access to drinking water, drainage and sewage, as well as rubbish collection and the provision of electricity, are debated. It is the role of the *délégué* to be an intermediary, and eventually to

bring these issues to the attention of the mayor or other representatives of the *commune d'arrondissement*.

### ***The political game of appointing the délégués in the municipality of Dakar: the influence of party politics***

Differences about which institution has the most power in the appointment of the *délégués de quartier*, the local notables or the agents of the municipality of Dakar, were noted above. Some *délégués* argued that the notables were the real authorities in this matter. One *délégué* I interviewed firmly claims that it is first and foremost the administrative authorities of Dakar who officially appoint and employ the *délégués de quartier*, although he admits that there has to be some recognition or acceptance by the notables. However, his main point is that there is not an administrative logic governing these appointments, rather they are determined by political considerations. When the PS controlled the state and administration, most *délégués* were appointed on the basis of the preferences and needs of the regime. Membership of the PS party or at least close relations to the authorities or representatives of the regime was of importance, according to this *délégué*. To him, the fact that two of the functioning *délégués* of Colobane live in the same street in the area of Sakora Badiane clearly illustrates how it is not administrative delimitation or the geographical distribution related to the needs of the population that influences the appointment of *délégués*, but rather a political game and party logic.

This *délégué* does not describe concrete practices, but indicates that there has been a pressure and action from the regime to appoint persons who were politically loyal, and that the PS administration procured information about political relations and affiliation before approving the appointment of *délégués*. For the PS regime, it was a way to impose trusted persons into positions of local authority in order to gain control, improve and make their politics successful, and to infiltrate the neighbourhood and its traditional and local authority structures. The *délégué* refers to the general politicisation of the appointment of positions of authority in Senegal and to the trouble of succession of different traditional leaders, like the Grand Serigne of Dakar, the president of the Lebous (Mbow 2008). He sees this as an effect of the internal competition of the formal political field, and claims that it harms popular representation and creates problems. Not only does it further erode the political legitimacy of politicians and political parties, and so deepen the political crisis in Senegal in general; it also

affects the position and standing of the *délégués de quartier* at the local level. He claims that the fact that the *délégués* are involved in party politics and have obtained their positions mainly due to the logic of party affiliation, and not primarily because they are honourable persons who recommend themselves as good leaders, as used to be the basis of the position in the past, will cause them to lose recognition and harm their position. As recognised representatives of the population and the notables, the *délégués* are interesting for political parties which struggle for legitimate representation. This has led local politicians to contact the *délégués de quartier* in Colobane to recruit them into their parties.

All the *délégués* of the neighbourhood have been politically active, but now claim to have stopped their political activities. One *délégué* reports good relations with the previous mayor of Dakar, Mamadou Diop (PS), who used to come to his house for support. He also shows us a picture of Abdou Diouf and Ousmane Diagne and says they are his friends, adding that his political sympathies are with the PDS of which he has always been a member. Another *délégué* was highly engaged in the PS and the general secretary of the party committee in the neighbourhood. This political involvement and close relations to the political authorities has continued from the colonial period, when the Lebou elite had close contact with the French colonial administration (see chapter 5). During interviews in 2002, all the *délégués* claimed no longer to be members of political parties, and some said they had had enough of politics. Still, they had relations with some of the most influential local politicians living in Colobane. The *délégués de quartier* now seem to hold a low profile politically and think it is better not to manifest political opinions in public.

The *délégués de quartier* refrain from openly expressing their support for a specific party as they are obliged to represent and serve everyone in the area, independent of political affiliation. The withdrawal from formal politics and weakened relations to party politics are seen as positive by the inhabitants of Colobane. They think it is good for authorities to be discreet about their personal political or religious affiliations. It might be particularly important as the *délégués* perceive the inhabitants of the neighbourhood to be disappointed and upset about politics and the politicians, whom they see as using local voters as a staircase to obtain a position of power from where they can also generate economic resources. Despite the hope related to the change of regime, there is still a political crisis of legitimacy whereby party politics is regarded as dirty and unjust even at the local level. Thus, it is vital for the *délégués de quartier* to juggle their position and relations to state institutions and party

representatives. They try to benefit from collaboration and recognition of the exchanges, but also to keep a certain distance from the practices and actors that lack recognition, to uphold their own power and legitimacy. One *délégué* argues that if he had attended political meetings or held a vital position in a party after becoming a *délégué de quartier*, a new logic would enter his tasks, obligations and exchanges. He is sure that he would experience a lot of people approaching him for money, as they would play on the political affiliation and implicitly refer to his access to resources through the party. However, it is the close physical and social proximity of the *délégués* and the lack of trust in state institutions and politicians that make many inhabitants see the *délégués de quartier* as more trustworthy and legitimate authorities.

## **The origins of the power and legitimacy of the *délégués de quartier***

The power and legitimacy of the *délégués de quartier* has both personal and institutional origins, and is related to actual practices. The historic role of the *délégués de quartier* as local state-society intermediaries makes them representatives of both state institutions and the inhabitants of Colobane. This traditional position of power of the *délégués* provides institutional capital, a certain recognition that belongs to their office. Institutionalised capital is also achieved through the process of nomination and appointment of the *délégués*, where the decision is dependent upon both the traditional authority of the notables and the political authorities who must acknowledge the *délégués* and so delegate power to him. The political authorities delegate part of the institutionalised power of state institutions when appointing and paying the *délégué* as their employee and representative. It might also be related to the delegated capital of the political party they are affiliated to, as it has often been the one controlling the state and administration. However, the general political crisis, characterised by the lack of legitimacy of politicians, may lead to discrediting the position of the *délégués* if they are openly involved in party politics. Similarly, the *délégués de quartier* in Colobane benefit from being recognised essentially as representatives and intermediaries of the inhabitants, and thus not as responsible for the flaws of local politicians or the deficiency in the functioning of public services.

The *délégués de quartier* are also delegated part of the institutionalised symbolic capital of the notables through the procedures of appointment and close collaboration and relations with

them. Their rather habitual respect and recognition as valued authorities of the neighbourhood is transferred to the *délégués* who become part of the group. That is why the *délégués* also draw upon the notables in their work. The *délégués* attain the symbolic capital of respect by relating to the imam and frequenting the local mosques, as this signals the practices of a good Muslim with good relations to the imam and thus his symbolic recognition.

However, if the appointment by and association with the local notables have traditionally provided the *délégués* with respect and legitimacy and still do, this may change in the future. There seem to be certain changes in the attitude towards the local notables, as the original Lebou notables establishing the neighbourhood pass away. Their more or less automatic legitimacy, not questioned or debated, does not seem to be so easily transferred to those who are following them, particularly not in the eyes of the younger generation. If the legitimacy of the notables will be questioned in the future, it will affect that of the *délégués*, as they are not directly elected by the population.

This will make the personal power of the *délégués*, based on individual practices and merit, even more important. The personal power of the *délégués* has been related to their personal characteristics, knowledge and charisma. Traditionally, the *délégués de quartier* have been older men, most often Lebous or others who have resided in Colobane for a long time. Age, belonging and wisdom have constituted the necessary capital to obtain the position of *délégué*. Social capital or relational capacity is also vital, as demonstrated by the necessity of social networks and contacts, not only with the population, but also with the notables of the neighbourhood and possibly representatives of the party in power and state institutions. One *délégué* describes how he thinks it was of great importance for his appointment that he was suggested for appointment to the council of notables by two Lebou notables, one of them himself a *délégué de quartier*. This latter was himself suggested as a *délégué de quartier* by a Lebou notable holding the position of *chef de quartier* of Khock in the Lebou republic and having close relations also with the Grand Serigne of Dakar (leader of the Lebous). Another *délégué* emphasises his and others' political affiliations and personal contacts as leading to the position. However, once they have become *délégués*, they must work to nurture relations and uphold their position of legitimacy.

Thus, even if the *délégués* draw upon and achieve power and legitimacy from being delegated part of the institutionalised capital of vital institutions in the political, social and religious

fields, their practices are of great importance for continued recognition. This implies that they must work to build and uphold social relations among the inhabitants of the neighbourhood, and perform their practices and obligations which are both formal and informal in nature to achieve sustained authority and recognition. This may explain how the views on, actions of and perceived tasks of the *délégués* vary somewhat from person to person, and why some *délégués* are more solicited than others. However, all the *délégués* see the importance of helping the inhabitants and serving the neighbourhood well to remain an acknowledged and legitimate representative. One *délégué* explains that if people do not get help, they may complain to the notables, the representatives of the commune or to the media, and sanctions may follow if they do not perform their tasks properly. The possibility of sanctions and complaints from the inhabitants of the neighbourhood may theoretically lead to a dismissal of the *délégué*, but the talk, rumours or complaints, would in itself seriously harm their position and reputation. It is necessary to be liked by the inhabitants of the neighbourhood to succeed in the position of *délégué de quartier*, and the appreciation of a *délégué* is heightened if he manages to solve problems and successfully mediate conflicts, either by using his own personal qualities or through referring people to the right institutions or persons. What seems to be vital regarding the power and legitimacy of the *délégués de quartier* of Colobane is social relations and networks in various social fields. Through these social relations and the associated practices the *délégué de quartier* obtain symbolic capital that makes him a respected political authority of the neighbourhood.

## **The future: threat of extinction or possible renewal?**

### ***Generational dynamics and societal changes***

The future role and power of the *délégués de quartier* is highly influenced by the actual change of generation taking place in the neighbourhood. First, this means that the generation of well respected elders, who experienced the move from the city and/or the establishment of Colobane, is now evaporating. Most are dead, and there are only a few individuals in their eighties and nineties left. There are other elders and notables who could be appointed, but as pointed out in chapter 5, there is a difference in their authority. They do not enjoy the same almost automatic legitimacy and recognition; it is more dependent upon their personal characteristics, merits and practices. Thus, there might be succession problems. Secondly, the



younger generation of the inhabitants in Colobane seem to use the *délégués de quartier* to a lesser extent than do the older people. According to the *délégués*, the younger generation are more prone to go directly to the police in difficult situations and to want to solve their problems quickly and independently. However, some *délégués* have good relations with the youth of their area of the neighbourhood. Particularly one of the *délégués* is preoccupied with helping them and in an attempt to keep them away from the temptations of the market in Colobane, like the illegal sales activities and the dealing or use of drugs, he gathers some of the unemployed boys outside his house, serves tea and generates discussions. He is conscious about trying to build relations with and between the generations. One *délégué* emphasises that the future of the office will be secured if young forceful candidates are inserted into the position when new *délégués* are appointed. He trusts that if some of the young and well-educated persons of the neighbourhood take over the position, they will be able to adjust to the new situations and many social changes. This is supported by Tall (1998), who argues that the gerontocracy of the office in such ancient neighbourhood contexts makes it less dynamic and the resistance to include women or young people in the functions of notables may be detrimental. He claims that new neighbourhoods that have appointed younger *délégués de quartier* have proved that it is possible to update the functions of the *délégué* and contribute to a revival of the position and its importance for the population and the neighbourhoods.

The *délégués* of Colobane all hold that things will change with the younger generations and many changes in the neighbourhood, but some hold that the traditional structures and authorities will be more resistant in the area of Khock, because of the history and traditions of the area. Because Khock was the first part of Colobane to be established and it was mainly occupied by Lebou families who were moved from the city, there is a greater social cohesion and respect for traditional authorities in the area. The inhabitants of Khock are seen and portrayed as generally more engaged in their neighbourhood and active in the use of the *délégués de quartier*, due to a socialisation that even affects the practices and attitudes of the young people. It is claimed that this is evident in the way the associations of the area relate to the *délégués* and notables, too. While in other areas they no longer respect the earlier principle of requesting the *délégués* for authorisation to organise events, or at least inform them about their activities, this development is not as visible in Khock. This is confirmed by the leader of a local association who explains how they contacted the *délégué de quartier* when they wanted to start the organisation and its activities, to consult and inform him about their plans. He presented their case to the local notables who discussed it and gave their consent. The

young leader says it would be difficult if they had been against it, because as Lebous they have to adjust to the hierarchy and respect it. He claims that the traditional authorities of the Lebou notables still have great power, even though it has weakened in recent years.

The differences between the areas of Colobane with regard to the use of and respect for the *délégués de quartier* is not only related to tradition or history, but also the fact that the other areas have had more strangers than Khock and also today have a lot more tenants. It seems as if the descendants of the original families in these areas are more likely to move out of the area and either to sell their houses or to rent out their property. The *délégués de quartier* claim that tenants are less concerned with what is happening in their local community and also more prone to disregard the role of the *délégués*. The many new inhabitants, tenants and immigrants of the neighbourhood do not use the *délégués* to the same degree as those originating from the area. If the tendency of the families of the original inhabitants to sell or rent out their houses continues and spreads, this could complicate the future of the *délégués de quartier*. Then again, the *délégués* report that there are people moving into the neighbourhood who do respect them and understand the functioning of the system. They come to introduce themselves or approach the mosque to present themselves to the imam and the *délégué de quartier* there. That the institution of *délégué de quartier* is generally well known and recognised, including by people not originating in Colobane, is confirmed by the practices of strangers approaching the local *délégués* for help. The *délégués* serve as contacts and provide assistance to strangers seeking food and lodging, or financial assistance for medical expenses or trips home from the city. The *délégués* therefore occasionally help people by inviting them to share meals or by providing housing. These expectations and practices add to the financial burden of being a *délégué de quartier*, and also put a strain on their families. Yet, they also demonstrate that the position of *délégué de quartier* is known outside the neighbourhood and is widely perceived as a legitimate local authority.

### ***State neglect***

While the *délégués de quartier* are still used by the population in Colobane, they complain about state neglect. Although there is a certain collaboration between the *délégués de quartier* and various local institutions and representatives of the state and administration, the *délégués* experience a lack of both resources and recognition in this mostly informal and non-regulated co-operation. The *délégués de quartier* in Colobane are frustrated by the lack of funding to

assist individuals who approach them for help. Even when they use their wages and other personal and familial resources, they do not manage to respond to all the solicitations or to provide sufficient aid. Economic support from the municipality of Dakar and/or the *commune d'arrondissement* would make them more able to solve local problems, and would also demonstrate and contribute to an acknowledgement of the *délégués de quartier*, their position and actual social obligations and tasks. According to the *délégués*, there have been numerous discussions on the salaries and resources available to them, and many promises from the national authorities of a raise. One of them stresses how the monthly wages of the *délégués de quartier* in Rufisque have been raised to 25,000 f.cfa. (approx. 38 euro) and how it provides a greater potential to provide help and indicates an important recognition and understanding of the important work done by the *délégués*.

The lack of formalisation and regulation of the practices of collaboration makes the *délégués de quartier* somewhat dissatisfied with their relations to the local state and administration. This may be exemplified with their informal co-operation with the police. On the one hand, the *délégués* are content with their mutual relations with the police, as it makes it possible for them to assist the inhabitants and as it involves appreciation both from the police and people in Colobane. On the other hand, the lack of institutionalised formal procedures leads to problems like the police approaching the *délégués* at all hours, and convocations being delivered too late, both by the police and the inhabitants. This makes the *délégués* feel disrespected, particularly as their complaints do not lead anywhere. One of the *délégués* has notified both the police and the mayor of the commune about late convocations and suggested that they must be received 48 hours in advance for the *délégués* to be able to solve the problem properly at the local level, but there has been no change in the public regulations or actual practices.

The *délégués de quartier* express a wish for extended and mutual collaboration not only with the police, but also the *commune d'arrondissement* and its representatives. They hold that an official and regulated agreement would benefit the somewhat limited relations with local state representatives, now consisting only of irregular and infrequent contact. The interaction takes place mainly on the initiative of the *délégués de quartier* who report the grievances of the neighbourhood to the municipal councillors of the *commune d'arrondissement*. Their reports always generate promises, but seldom subsequent action. As an illustration, one *délégué* has contacted the commune about the problems related to the heavy traffic running through the

neighbourhood and suggested the construction of speed bumps to reduce the speed of the traffic and the associated problems. Municipal councillors have agreed and made promises of swift achievement, but nothing has been done. The *délégués* generally feel that their initiatives and information are not appreciated or taken into account, and that their knowledge and competence is not properly valued.

The *délégués* wish for an expansion of their role and mediation of local state-society relations and a greater exchange of information between them and the representatives of local state institutions. They report that both the *commune d'arrondissement* and the municipality of Dakar fail to disseminate relevant information to the *délégués* of Colobane. They are never informed of the planned or performed work of the municipality of Dakar, like construction projects, and they were, for instance, neither solicited nor informed of the work on the budget of the commune. The *délégués* want a real co-operation and co-determination involving an official recognition of their office and their tasks, and are convinced that it would benefit all parties; the inhabitants of Colobane, the representatives of the commune and the *délégués de quartier* themselves. They refer to the past, when the colonial administration had regular meetings and real cooperation with the *chefs de quartier*. According to one of the *délégués*, this was to their advantage and a necessity of their office. He holds that this should be acknowledged also by the present local state, and that representatives of the commune fail to see the role of the *délégués* as real and good representatives of the grassroots and local community of the neighbourhood. They think it indicates a lack of respect and understanding of their position and tasks, and it restrains their competence from being put to use for the population. The *délégués* hold that a well organised collaboration would cause the issues of the inhabitants to be taken into consideration to a greater extent, making it possible to work constructively for the benefit of the neighbourhood and achieve a more genuine decentralisation and democratisation.

Neither the office of *délégué de quartier* nor the neighbourhood (*quartier*) itself are included in the decentralisation, something that may weaken popular participation as they see themselves as too distanced from the politicians of the commune, who often lack knowledge of the realities of the neighbourhoods of the commune (Tall 1998). This also relates to the problem that the *délégués* only have a formal relationship with the municipality of Dakar and not the *communes d'arrondissement*, which is the lowest, or most decentralised, level of the state. The *délégués de quartier* of Colobane hold they could play a vital role in the politics of

decentralisation. They see the decentralisation in Senegal as incomplete and widely ignored by the government in general and the local state in particular. Although there is talk about decentralisation and democratisation, there is no real action and the local political authorities fail to consider the base of society. One *délégué* thinks a closer cooperation with the *délégués de quartier* and the population would help the commune greatly in its work and improve its functioning, as the politicians would heighten their awareness of the situation in the neighbourhood, get in touch with the population and access information valuable for taking the interest of the inhabitants into account. This is supported by Tall (1998), who argues that the mayors of the *communes d'arrondissement* should use the *délégués de quartier* to avoid a decentralisation without local development. He holds that they would help bridge the gap between the mayor and the local populations. The *délégués de quartier* of Colobane argue in the same manner, and hold that they possess necessary knowledge and represent the local community and should therefore be actively used. They claim to have much better contact with the inhabitants of the neighbourhood than the politicians, and greater legitimacy as recognised authorities and representatives.

However, there seems to be a lack of willingness from local politicians to use the *délégués*. The *délégués* think this is related not only to the missing appreciation of their insight and role as representatives of the population, but also to a lack of interest for the situation of the inhabitants of Colobane and an absence of motivation to work for their benefit. The *délégués* complain that none of the new municipal councillors elected in 2002 have contacted them for information or collaboration, even if some of them lack required knowledge to perform their functions. However, they do have certain hopes for an improved collaboration after attending a meeting arranged by the *commune d'arrondissement* where the needs of the population and planned construction work was debated. Still, the *délégués de quartier* in Colobane claim that most practices of the PS regime seem to be continued and reproduced also by the representatives of the PDS, such as the lack of consultation and mutuality in the relations between the *délégués de quartier* and representatives of the commune, and the non-transparent political practices of the latter. One *délégué* complains of the manner in which the new mayor of the commune provided the imams and the *délégués de quartier* with a sack of rice and two packets of sugar before the religious celebration of Tabaski. As it was meant for personal use and not to help solve the problems of the population, it seemed more like a kind of bribe, to signal an apparent symbolic recognition of the local authorities in exchange for their political support.

The *délégués de quartier* hold that such practices must be put to an end. Coupled with the lack of initiative and priority of serving the neighbourhood and its population, it signals a deficient interest from the municipal councillors and the mayor of the situation of Colobane and its inhabitants. It substantiates the general public impression that political representatives struggle for positions only to 'do politics' and 'eat' resources and so contributes to a reproduction of the crisis of legitimacy of politicians and party politics developing under the PS regime. As the practices and representatives of formal politics do not seem trustworthy to people, the *délégués de quartier* argue that they are more legitimate and resourceful representatives of the population. However, one *délégués* adds that the lack of interest and recognition from the political authorities not only impedes the functioning of decentralisation and local democracy; it also undermines the recognised authority of the *délégués*. He fears it might contribute to a downwards spiralling of their legitimacy and authority.

It is difficult to envisage the future of the *délégués de quartier* in Colobane. After I had completed my fieldwork, two of the incumbents died, and to my knowledge no new *délégués de quartier* have been appointed to replace them, but the relatives of the deceased *délégués* continue performing functions including the production of official documents like residence certificates. The prospects for the office depend upon the eventual appointment of new *délégués* by both the local notables and the municipality of Dakar, or the eventual heredity and routinisation of the position to the relatives of the earlier *délégués* of Colobane. Due to all the changes in the neighbourhood, some have expressed that the only possibility of survival for the position is the appointment of young and dynamic *délégués* who are autonomous and educated, and so able to handle the new situation of Colobane and relate to all the various actors and many changes in the neighbourhood. This could maintain or restore the legitimate and recognised authority of the *délégués de quartier*.

## Conclusion

The *délégués de quartier* have for a long time served as intermediaries of local state-society relations, and are representatives of both the inhabitants of Colobane and the municipality of Dakar. They have certain formal tasks as auxiliaries of the administration, as well as informal

tasks of information, control and conflict mediation. However, when exploring the politics of their appointment, it is obvious that they are representatives of the local notables who elect the *délégués de quartier* in the neighbourhood, and possibly also the political party or regime controlling the municipality of Dakar. While this provides power to the *délégués*, it may in the future also provide obstacles. Party politics and representatives suffer from a lack of legitimacy among the population, and there is a certain dissonance as the *délégués* are not formally related to the *commune d'arrondissement* that was created in 1996. In addition, as the generation of the original Lebou dignitaries passes away, the legitimacy of their successors does not seem to be habitual or automatic. This all represents an uncertain future for the *délégués de quartier* of Colobane, particularly when juxtaposed with other social changes and political practices. There is a tendency for the younger generations not to use or respect the *délégués* to the same extent as the older generation, and neither do the increasing number of newcomers and tenants in the neighbourhood. However, the institution of *délégués de quartier* is still valued and employed by some of them. There are also signs that the characteristics and practices of individual *délégués* will be decisive for their future recognition, along with their direct social relations with the inhabitants. The *délégués* yet feel that among the biggest threats to their position is the deficient recognition by the local state, not only at the level of the municipality, but also and mainly of the *commune d'arrondissement*. The *délégués* need adequate resources, official recognition and a greater authority to be able to perform their duties successfully. The *délégués* claim to possess knowledge and legitimacy that would help the representatives of the commune to promote the interests of the inhabitants of Colobane and solve the problems of the neighbourhood. Their argument is that they could contribute to a better realisation of decentralised and democratic politics through a regulated and official collaboration with the *commune d'arrondissement*, as its representatives now lack legitimacy and do not seem interested in working for the population that elected them. However, the appointment of younger, educated and more autonomous *délégués de quartier* may still have the potential of reviving the position of the office in the neighbourhood of Colobane.





## 7. Local state-society relations and the political field: the dominance of network politics

*Khady is on her way to the house of a female local politician of the neighbourhood. They have lived in the same area for years and also know each other from engagement in one of the local women's associations. Khady has heard rumours that this politician now has large amounts of rice to distribute to political supporters and personal contacts. She hopes to get a share as the budget of her family is particularly tight due to the illness of a younger sister and the related medical expenses. As she enters the house, the known face of a respected family father from the area meets her. He is thanking the politician for the assistance she has provided him and praises her by exclaiming: 'I am proud of you; you are a responsible person who helps the inhabitants of Colobane! I am pleased to back you up and support you'.*

This episode illustrates one way in which state-society relations play out in the neighbourhood of Colobane. Due to economic strains, the residents of the neighbourhood engage in multi-activity and draw on their social contacts and networks to cope with everyday expenses. One strategy is to approach local politicians for help. In this case, the solicitation was not very problematic for Khady as there was an identifiable resource to be handed out and the distribution of rice was beneficial for the politician too. The material support was exchanged for symbolic recognition as a legitimate representative and a publicly articulated political support that would provide the politician with a good reputation in the neighbourhood. This exchange demonstrates how concrete state-society encounters and political practices may and do take place in private arenas and across societal fields through the catalyst of social relationships. They are part of local network politics and entail struggles and negotiations for symbolic and material resources.

The aim of this chapter is to explore local state-society relations in the neighbourhood of Colobane. The first section of this chapter describes the *commune d'arrondissement* as the local state for the inhabitants of the neighbourhood, and discusses their relations and attitudes towards its representatives. I argue that past practices have created a lack of legitimacy and general distrust, but that there are hopes for change with the new regime after the local elections of 2002. As illustrated above, inhabitants approach local politicians and representatives of the *commune d'arrondissement* to ask for help with everyday problems and expenses. These do give concessions, but only in exchange for political support and legitimate

representation. Thus, it seems as if local state-society relations mainly take place through personal relations or intermediaries in a political network system. These aspects of network politics are also characteristic of the internal competition of the political field that is discussed in the next section of the chapter. The resulting battles for political power and access to economic resources mainly take the form of factionalism and competition within the *commune d'arrondissement*. Access to state institutions and their resources is important for local politicians to be able to secure political supporters through a redistribution of material resources. In turn, popular support and legitimate representation granted by inhabitants will help local politicians to assert themselves and obtain a position within a political party or state structure. How the local politicians and representatives of the local commune have engaged in mismanagement and corruption when obtaining political positions is discussed thereafter.

In the main section of the chapter, I argue that the struggle for and power of legitimate political authority not only involves an internal competition among politicians, but also their relations to and negotiations with the represented, the inhabitants of Colobane. The interaction between them, and thus local state-society relations, are mainly characterised by personal relations and a negotiated exchange of resources, often through the dynamic negotiation and playing of patron-client roles. While such relations are unequal due to the greater power of political patrons, they hold a logic of flexibility and the related exchanges of symbolic and material resources may generate benefits for both parties. Local politicians struggle for recognition and legitimate authority, while inhabitants strive for economic capital to handle everyday problems in a difficult material situation. A main feature of this network politics is how social relations and networks and their symbolic character are important catalysts for and may be converted into political and economic capital. In the concluding section of the chapter, local state-society relations are characterised as marked by changing continuities and paradoxical network politics. Despite the hopes and wishes for real political changes after the *Alternance*, the unintended consequences of individual strategies of local politicians and the inhabitants of the neighbourhood are the reproduction of the political practices, logic and system they actually wish to change.

## **The *commune d'arrondissement* and legitimacy among the inhabitants of Colobane: general distrust, but hopes of change**

In order to understand the nature of state-society relations in Colobane, it is necessary to examine the *commune d'arrondissement* of Gueule-Tapée, Fass and Colobane, which is a primary arena of resource accumulation for its employees and political elites, and thus also an institution that is related to the exchange of resources that mark local state-society relations. It is the *commune d'arrondissement* that is the local state for the inhabitants, but it is vital also to take into account the wider political context in which it operates. Of particular importance in this regard is the way in which the decentralised government system has been elaborated by local and national political authorities, as well as the *Alternance* that brought about regime change in the early 2000s.

The *commune d'arrondissement* of Gueule-Tapée, Fass and Colobane covers three different neighbourhoods and has a municipal council consisting of 56 elected councillors and a mayor. Twelve of the municipal councillors are representatives of and elected from Colobane. The *commune d'arrondissement* also has a permanent administrative and technical staff. Besides the members of the municipal council, they are perceived as the main representatives of the local state by the local inhabitants, but not excluding officers of local police stations, other politicians and the contractual workers of the commune. The *communes d'arrondissement* were established in 1996 through the *code des collectivités locales*; the rules and regulations of the decentralisation reform (Tall 1998). The *commune d'arrondissement* of Gueule-Tapée, Fass and Colobane is one of 19 *communes d'arrondissement* in Dakar, and is part of the municipality of Dakar, which pays the wages of the administrative and technical staff and provides part of the budget. The *communes d'arrondissement* each hold at least two seats in the municipal council of Dakar, of which one is always held by the mayor of the respective commune.<sup>19</sup>

The establishment of the *communes d'arrondissement* was part of the gradual process of decentralisation, and of democratic reform. However, as mentioned in chapter 4, the reforms and new institutional arrangements did not always function as intended and they were frequently also moulded in line with the goals of the PS regime (Beck 1997, Creevey et al.

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<sup>19</sup> [http://www.gouv.sn/collect/2002\\_174.html](http://www.gouv.sn/collect/2002_174.html), [\\_175.html](#)

2005). Several of the politicians in Colobane who have long been involved in the PS also at national levels claim that the communes were created to relieve the pressure on the regime for reform and were designed in a way that was beneficial to the party. One interviewee suggests that nine communes d'arrondissement in the municipality of Dakar were planned, but that the number was expanded to 19 to serve the political need to remunerate long-time political leaders wanting to withdraw from national politics and wishing for a position of power with access to economic resources. The *communes d'arrondissement* were also formed to fight the increasing political opposition to the PS in Dakar (Tall 1998).

Although the establishment of the *communes d'arrondissement* in 1996 did uphold the power of the PS regime, the inhabitants of Colobane to some extent see it as a positive step in a gradual process of democratisation. It has provided them with the possibility to elect their local political representatives and thus partly affect the local political space they relate to. A former politician argues that the greater proximity between the representatives and represented contributed to closer bonds between state and society and that the resources of the *commune d'arrondissement* came closer to the inhabitants of the neighbourhood through the elected municipal councillors. This made it possible and easier to approach the politicians and representatives of the local state. As demonstrated above, the inhabitants of Colobane solicit local politicians for help with daily expenditures, for instance for food, water, gas, electricity and medical help. In a difficult situation of poverty and unemployment, such established practices and social relations are used to secure basic needs. In addition, the requests of inhabitants concern the general need for improvement of living conditions in the neighbourhood. Individually or in groups, they try to secure collective benefits related to health and solve problems of public water and sanitation services, by contacting and influencing local politicians or state representatives. The creation of the communes improved the possibilities for network politics also in local state-society relations and generated and reproduced practices where local politicians often distribute money and provide assistance in exchange for political support.

Since its creation in 1996, there have been three different councils and mayors running the *commune d'arrondissement* of Gueule-Tapée, Fass and Colobane. The PS controlled the commune until late December 2001, when all local communes were dissolved by amendment (the *Amandement* Moussa Sy) because of the *Alternance*. During the presidential elections of 2000 and the subsequent parliamentary elections in 2001, the PS regime lost its power and the

opposition coalition led by the PDS came to dominate the national political scene. Due to these vast political alterations, it was decided to install interim local municipal councils led by special delegations until local elections were held in May 2002. The new municipal council of the commune was dominated by councillors from the PDS and other parties forming the coalition that overthrew the PS regime. The commune also had a mayor from the PDS. With the new team in place from May/June 2002, the inhabitants of the neighbourhood hoped for real political changes at the local level and improvements of the living conditions of Colobane.

While expressing hopes of genuine alterations at the local level and particularly related to the commune, there also seemed to be a certain reserve among the inhabitants of Colobane. Both in general conversations and through interviews, numerous inhabitants claimed that their earlier experiences with locally elected representatives had left them only moderately optimistic. Both younger and older residents of both sexes expressed disappointment with the local political representatives of the PS regime. They claim that they did not work to improve the living conditions of the neighbourhood or to develop the area in any way. In addition, both local politicians and residents of Colobane indicate that the ideas of participation, co-determination and popular influence have not been put into practice. The mentioned popular and general distrust in politics is obvious in the many comments of how the *commune d'arrondissement* constituted a new arena for accessing resources for greedy politicians. Interviews with key informants in the *commune d'arrondissement* reveal that it functioned as a cash box for the PS and its representatives through episodes of appropriation and corruption. Despite the criticism of the political institutions, the representatives and practices of the *commune d'arrondissement*, some representatives of the local state are well-known and respected. This is often those showing personal engagement, distributing accessed resources and otherwise assisting individual inhabitants and working for benefit of the neighbourhood. As illustrated above, the established relations between the local inhabitants and representatives of the state are mainly of personal nature and often involve an exchange of symbolic and material resources.

The dismissal of the PS regime through the elections of 2000–2002 signalled a break. The election of the opposition of the former regime, who had criticised established political practices and promised change, held the potential of a new and more democratic logic to

politics in general, and to popular participation and workings of the commune in particular. In formal interviews and general conversation, inhabitants of Colobane express hopes that the change of government and local representatives would entail new political practices that could improve the functioning of the local state, manage the hard socio-economic situation and provide popular political influence. However, at the time of the fieldwork, earlier practices still seemed to persist and these hopes were not yet fulfilled. According to various local politicians, the established political practices endure and the competition among politicians for positions of political power that grant access to the economic capital of the political institutions is as strong as earlier. The attitude generally conveyed by inhabitants of Colobane is that politicians negotiate support only for themselves, their faction or party in exchange for actual or promised material resources of individual or collective nature. They compete to secure a dominant political position and appropriate the related political, symbolic and economic capital.

## **The struggle among the professionals of the formal political field**

The struggle among the elites of the political field takes the form of network politics, too. It is characterised by competition, for instance, between networks of personal relations and political contacts, such as in the factionalism that has characterised Senegalese party politics (Beck 1996, Cruise O'Brien 1975, Galvan 2001). The political elites ally and compete for political positions and access to related material resources. The appointment of the new mayor within the municipal council after the 2002 local elections illustrates the fierce political competition in local politics that also occurs in Colobane.

The PDS politician Mr Ba was elected mayor of the *commune d'arrondissement* of Gueule Tapée, Fass and Colobane by the new municipal council elected in 2002, holding a majority of councillors from the PDS. Despite the fact that he was legally elected by the municipal councillors of the commune, there has been discontent about the process of his appointment. There is dissatisfaction about the choice of an 'unknown' candidate who is not seen as a legitimate representative, particularly as popular local candidates were rejected in the process. In interviews, some politicians from Colobane hold that a central candidate of the local section of the party was pushed out of the party and local politics in general as he was not part

of and was partly in opposition to the strongest local faction of the PDS. They tell of local dispute and a strong pressure from the PDS centrally regarding the candidature of Ba. According to a municipal councillor from the PDS, there were at least three other strong candidates for the position who were excluded due to factional logics. One of them was a well-qualified and powerful local PDS politician who had good chances due to prior experience, established relations with the neighbourhood and a long time investment in the local party structure. During an interview, this representative explained how she was overridden by an influential PDS representative higher up the political ladder who belonged to another faction of the party and promoted another of the local candidates. As she knew this would make it impossible to win in the internal competition, she instead decided to and managed to get the support of her faction at the local level to back the candidacy of Ba. To my understanding, this was also related to her good relations at regional and national levels of the PDS, as strong forces in the central party also wanted Ba as the new mayor of the commune. Thus, internal competition among candidates and factions at the local level and their connections to the factions present also at regional and national levels of the political party paved the way for alliances that supported the candidature of Ba. Several municipal councillors confirm that the appointment of Ba was related to the factionalism of the PDS, and his vital personal relations and network in the PDS.

Ba has a strong position within the PDS and close personal bonds to central persons of the party, according to a PDS councillor. He is both the personal friend and adviser of the president and has a close relationship to the mayor of Dakar city, Pape Diop, who is also the president of the national assembly. They have been activists for and associated with the same section of the party in the past. This is a good example of how, in Bourdieu's terms (1986), the personal social capital of Ba and his investment in the PDS grants access to a position of large and institutionalised political and economic capital. However, as it is the municipal council that elects the mayor, the election of Ba also sheds light on the relations between the various levels of the state and party. Despite the fact that they elected the mayor, municipal councillors express discontent with the process, mainly through a relatively covert and quiet critique from both representatives of oppositional parties and those of the PDS. The opinion that the local representatives of the PDS could not vote according to individual conviction, but had to support Ba due to the strong pressure from their own party, was reflected in many interviews with municipal councillors. A few also pointed to the somewhat limited experience of the newly elected PDS representatives who form the majority of this and many other

municipal councils as an explanation for the ease with which the decisions made at the central level of the PDS were carried out at local level. They maintain that mayors have been appointed through the dictation of the PDS centrally in several communes in Dakar, including that of Gueule Tapée, Fass and Colobane. His network of relations to powerful people and factions at the higher ranks of the PDS seem to have been crucial.

This is an example of how the factionalism, or internal competition within political parties, that has long characterised Senegalese politics (Barker 1973, Beck 2008) is not only present at the national level, but also runs through the party-systems at regional and local levels. It demonstrates the internal competition among the professionals of the formal political field (Bourdieu 1991). This competition materialises in various ways in the local political field of Colobane: in addition to the struggles between factions within political parties and the well-known competition between political parties, there are power struggles between the administration and the municipal councillors of the commune, and rivalry among individual political representatives. They compete over legitimate representation of the inhabitants, or non-professionals in Bourdieu's (1991) terms, as well as the power and economic and social resources that comes with a political position. This competition of the political field is characterised by network politics and a battle for political power and access to various resources. These are vital both for personal enrichment and redistribution to local inhabitants.

The struggles between political parties form the basis of the electoral system and of the logic of politics. In Colobane local party representatives compete to win supporters, both for themselves and for their party. This of course involves negotiations and exchanges with the inhabitants of the neighbourhood, but also influences the practices of politicians and workings of the *commune d'arrondissement*. Municipal councillors and others employed in the *commune d'arrondissement* explain how politicians all act in line with the logic of strengthening one's own party and reducing the possibilities of competitors. This party politics is reflected, for instance, in how the great majority of politicians appointed as leaders for various committees of the commune are PDS representatives, and how municipal councillors who belong to the PDS have greater possibilities of seeing the mayor and retrieving vital information of the commune. Access to resources and the asset of information is furthermore used in the competition and power battle between the administrative staff of the *mairie* and the elected representatives of the *commune d'arrondissement*. Information is strategically used or withheld as trump card to improve one's position and harm opponents.



As mentioned in several interviews, this has been especially efficient after the *Alternance*, since quite a few of the new municipal councillors from the PDS have little or no previous experience of the commune. In fact, the personnel inserted by the new political regime are not used to the management of public institutions (Diop 2006). This has made the newly elected municipal councillors of the commune d'arrondissement of Gueule Tapée, Fass and Colobane more dependent upon the administration and technical staff who have prior knowledge and great experience of the commune and its formal workings and informal practices. To illustrate the results of this competition, it often became evident during interviews with administrative and elected representatives of the commune that municipal councillors and even deputy mayors were unaware of vital information and documents which we had previously procured or learnt of.

As demonstrated by the example of the election of the mayor, the factionalism of the PS regime persisted after the *Alternance* and still affects political practices and the functioning of the commune. The intense competition and struggle within parties can be seen also in other practices of the *commune d'arrondissement*. Several representatives of the commune claim that access to the mayor and appointment to key positions in the commune is related not only to party-affiliation, but also to personal relations and membership of a faction of the party. Since the mayor and a few other centrally placed individuals control the budget and in practice run the commune, these practices and logics have great economic and practical consequences. In an interview, a municipal councillor explained how being related to powerful commune representatives who are centrally placed in a local party faction is a necessity for him to obtain influence in the party and for easing his work in the commune.

Another reflection of the struggle for positions, political power and access to resources that characterises the political field is the phenomenon of political transhumance. Transhumance is a concept describing livestock changing grazing lands, and the political transhumance refers to how politicians move from one party to another. There were tendencies of political transhumance already when the criticism towards the PS regime became severe and the long campaign towards the presidential elections of 2000 started; some prominent national politicians started new parties with the help of their party faction and adhering militants or joined the opposition with their group (Galvan 2001). After the defeat of the PS there was a substantial transhumance of political representatives moving to the PDS at national, regional and local levels when individual politicians changed their political affiliation in droves

(Creevey et al. 2005, Cruise O'Brien 2002c, Juul 2006, Prag 2004, Vengroff and Magala 2001). This political transhumance was also experienced in the *commune d'arrondissement* of Gueule-Tapée, Fass and Colobane, where the former PS mayor and several other PS politicians became supporters and representatives mainly of the PDS. In interviews, politicians explain this practice as motivated by their wish to obtain a position of power with access to institutions and economic resources and the need to belong to the sitting regime to get such a possibility. In addition, they hold that it is the only way to make a real difference for the neighbourhood; one must be affiliated to the party in power to have a say in the commune and access resources and initiate projects that may benefit the neighbourhood. Also Galvan (2001) claims that this shifting of political loyalty and party is made to maintain access to state and party resources, which again is needed to mobilise political supporters.

The transhumants are generally looked upon with scepticism, according to several municipal councillors from Colobane. As formerly constituting the opposition and as newcomers to the PDS, the transhumants do not have the same recognition within the party or among the population. PDS politicians who have engaged in and supported the party through the long period of opposition criticise these new representatives for not having invested the needed time and energy into the party to really belong to the PDS and for having evaded the hard period of opposition needed to achieve change. They are seen as opportunists, not holding the sincerity of long-time and legitimate party representatives. Even if the transhumants in theory do not have the same opportunities within the party or the commune, the reality that quite a few of the PDS municipal councillors elected in 2002 lack experience and competence has created certain opportunities for the transhumants. As former PS politicians, many of them possess valuable knowledge and skills related to the functioning of the commune and other state institutions, also at municipal and national levels. They are therefore valuable for the present work and performance of the commune. Thus, due to the inexperience of several of their fellow PDS councillors, transhumants that originally lacked legitimacy have been granted positions in the commune, which has secured them continued access to communal resources. The various forms in which such resources are accessed are discussed in the next section. The history of such practices during the PS regime, and their reproduction under the PDS, it is argued, constitute a major challenge to the legitimacy of the elites of the local political field.

### ***‘Eating’ to secure political support or for personal accumulation of capital***

For individual representatives, local politics seem to be mostly about obtaining a position of political power and profiting from the resources attached to it, both for redistribution and personal enrichment. As shown earlier in this chapter, representatives of the commune and other local politicians describe a history of competition for resources among the elites of the local political field. These political elites have not only competed but also formed alliances to be able to extract resources from the institutions and the positions they occupy. Some claim that the practices during the PS regime amounted to a general logic of corruption and mismanagement, but such practices seem to persist also after the *Alternance*.

The term *bouffer*, to eat, is used as a representation of such political practices both by politicians and inhabitants of Colobane. It thus corresponds with the regular portrayal of such political practices in Senegal and also that referred to by Bayart (1993) in his concept of the politics of the belly. This is confirmed by Blundo (2007), referring to certain political positions being called *postu lekkukay* (*lekk* means eat in Wolof), as they involve access to resources and possibilities for personal enrichment. In Colobane, when talking about politicians appropriating the funds of the *commune d'arrondissement* in interviews or conversations, both inhabitants and politicians say that local politicians struggle to ‘eat’ as much of the communal resources as possible. An employee of the commune since it was established in 1996 told me how he has experienced and participated in such illegitimate practices during the reign of the PS. He holds that corruption and the appropriation of the funds of the commune was common. The aim was both personal enrichment and the redistribution of resources for political purposes; to obtain, maintain and reward supporters and personal relations. There were various practices that took place. For instance, a great number of persons were on the payroll of the commune under the PS, but never actually worked there, according to several local politicians.

The acceptance of such malpractice and corruption is explained by politicians as related to the competitive system of the PS regime. It exemplifies what Bourdieu (1991, 1993) calls the competition among the professionals of the formal political field. Politicians and employees of the commune need constantly to take precautions and plan for the future to guard against potential adversaries, for instance, by avoiding removing or punishing someone today who could create problems later. The practices of the mayor and municipal councillors of the

commune are informed by the tacit logic and sometimes deliberate strategy of winning present and future struggles and to gain or uphold positions of power. As allies, supporters and votes are also needed in future elections and political battles, they use every opportunity to secure them. In an interview, an employee of the commune told me how people breaking the law are not punished, but instead summoned by the commune and helped with papers in exchange for support and votes at the next elections.

Another example that demonstrates how those working for the commune are able to 'eat' its resources is related to the collection of taxes from the part of the market in Colobane that belongs to the commune. According to a member of the technical staff of the commune, the collector discusses or bargains with the commune, tells them what he thinks he can collect and later renders this amount only. Any collection above this amount goes directly to his personal use and contributes to his income, and he is never controlled. Such practices are also recorded by Blundo (2007), who also describes how such collectors make a profit through negotiated arrangements and bargaining with the merchants. A different illustration from the *commune d'arrondissement* of Gueule Tapée, Fass and Colobane is given by a long time employee of the commune who explains how it is vital to work in relation to the budget to release money that can be used for personal enrichment. During the PS regime, there were several ways of accessing the resources of the commune, but one that was effective was to retrieve money reserved for different kinds of work and programmes, with the help of accomplices. Through affiliation to the commune, it was possible to find an entrepreneur and then ask someone in the commune to fill out an order form of say 2.5 million f.cfa (approx. 3810 euro). When the money was transferred, you could take 500,000 for yourself, and present 2 million to the commune or the mayor. The trick was to link it to a post or project of the budget, like the repair of an official building, to justify the release of the money from the treasury. The planned work was not performed, only sketched to get hold of the money. There were supposed to be controls, but these were rarely, if ever, exercised.

According to a long time municipal councillor, it was particularly helpful if the controller and treasurer was related to the mayor and his political network or faction; then you were sure that the necessary papers would be signed and the money transferred without questions. Such political alliances and personal relations were of great value in case of inspections too; you would always find someone to testify that the work had been initiated. According to this politician, those trying to oppose and change such practices, either by taking the initiative to

discuss the matter or by saying that they would report it to the police, were always bought off. They were offered money, and in a situation where most struggled to pay their rent or provide for their families, the money was accepted in return for their silence. Even if politicians when interviewed claim that they see such illegitimate practices as problematic, most seem to think that they will continue under the new municipal council and mayor of the PDS.

A few of the employees of the administration and the technical division of the commune had at the time of the fieldwork already been approached by the newly elected municipal councillors. They knew that with a position and affiliation to the commune they might access its resources, and because of established practices and many years in opposition, working for the PDS to obtain their leading position, they now feel 'entitled' to their share of the resources as a reward. However, as they lack experience of the workings of the commune, they approach those who have been employed there for some time to ask how they must go about the 'eating'. Thus, although the PDS denounced such practices when in opposition, and there are PDS representatives now opposing or expressing disapproval of such misconduct and corruption, the new team of the commune seem to uphold these practices. One municipal councillor goes as far as labelling the commune as a commune of corruption after the *Alternance*, as he sees almost everyone invested in a position struggling to 'eat' some of its resources. A different politician calls the new mayor a gourmand; someone who likes to eat and is greedy, and explains how this creates problems for the commune. It creates deficits in the budget and small chances for planned projects to be realised. He provides the example of how phones in the mairie were disconnected for a long time, and only the offices of the mayor and the secretariat have been reconnected. Another representative emphasises how the contractual workers sweeping and cleaning the streets were let off for an indefinite time and reportedly had two months' wages outstanding due to lack of funds in the commune. Several representatives of the commune say this is rather secret information, only directly known to those who know the commune well.

Mismanagement and corruption thus create a situation of disappearing funds and little constructive action in the *commune d'arrondissement*. Over time, the inhabitants of Colobane have experienced that projects have repeatedly been promised and initiated for years, but never started or finished, like the improvement of the sewer system and water provision, as well as the construction of a health centre. This lack of implementation of planned projects adds to the strained image and attitude towards politicians and politics in general. To

counteract this process of diminishing legitimacy, a representative of the commune explains how they have always tried to conceal the malpractice mentioned above. They have arranged promotions where the commune calls in entrepreneurs to develop offers in relation to a planned construction project to create the impression of action to make a solution to problems. However, according to this employee, it is only an image; usually the projects are not carried out and the money disappears.

These practices of local politicians in general and the representatives of the commune in particular make the inhabitants question not only their practices, but also their motives and positions of power. They are generally portrayed as only working for their own position and enrichment, not for the benefit of the commune, the neighbourhood or its inhabitants. A common statement in conversations and interviews is that local politicians are only seeking to obtain a position that will benefit their political career and secure them economic resources for personal enrichment. It is this '*politique politicienne*' which is seen to characterise the practices and struggles of politicians as professionals of the formal political field. This is depicted as an immanent problem of the political system by both local politicians and the inhabitants of Colobane. This has made the inhabitants see their elected representatives, the municipal councillors and the mayor, as irresponsible and uninterested. However, there seems to be a difference depending on whether the appropriated economic resources are meant for personal use and accumulation, or redistributed among political supporters, personal contacts, friends and family. As I understand it, such practices are less often represented as corruption when the resources are shared with others, and particularly with those at the lower levels of the social strata. Nevertheless, the wish for change and new discourses on accountability, transparent politics and popular participation creates a critique of and a certain ambivalence with regard to such established practices.

The distrust in politics and elected representatives constitutes a problem for local politicians and municipal councillors. It is not sufficient to assert oneself in the competition amongst the professionals of the formal political field and to obtain a position in a political party or state structure to attain the authority of legitimate representation. The struggle to represent the 'non-professionals' (Bourdieu 1991) through a position that holds political power and provides access to economic resources also involves nurturing relations to and negotiating with the inhabitants of Colobane. It is necessary also to gain their approval and to mobilise supporters and generate votes to attain and uphold political positions and to obtain needed

recognition. Thus, the struggle for legitimate authority of representation not only involves an internal competition among the professionals of the formal political field, but also simultaneously comprises the mutual relations, negotiations and exchanges between inhabitants and politicians in Colobane.

## **Relational practices and negotiations for exchanges of symbolic and material resources between politicians and inhabitants**

The power of the individuals holding dominant positions in the local state or party structures derives from different sources. Through their positions they are connected to a relatively high volume of institutionalised political capital, which originate, for instance, from the *commune d'arrondissement* or their political party. In addition, there are often also high volumes of institutionalised social and economic capital associated with the position in the form of networks and access to material resources. However, due to the practices of the PS regime and general popular discontent with the political system, political representatives and the institutions they embody suffer a lack of legitimacy. This makes their personal capital and individual practices of even greater importance, as they need in some way to portray themselves as different and worthy of recognition. The power and resources of an individual is related to the volume and composition of his or her personal capital, such as social contacts and networks, economic resources and symbolic recognition. Indeed, both obtaining and maintaining political positions is linked to the personal capital of the individual, generated through, for instance, investment in a political party and the nurturing of social relationships, as demonstrated in the example of Ba, the mayor of the *commune d'arrondissement*. However, the history and actual practices of individual politicians is also of vital importance in generating or upholding political capital. They must try to demonstrate a difference from the earlier poor experiences the inhabitants of Colobane have of elected representatives. Local politicians therefore work hard to attain, maintain or strengthen their positions as political authorities. The symbolic capital of legitimate representation is mainly granted through negotiations with the represented.

Thus, the struggles in the political field, such as that of legitimate representation, are not restricted to the internal competition among the professionals of political parties and state

institutions. Just as important are the relations and negotiations between the inhabitants and local politicians (Stokke and Selboe forthcoming). For politicians these two aspects of politics are of mutually reinforcing nature; a position in a political party or state structure might provide political power and access to resources that might contribute to popular support and recognition, and the legitimate authority of representation granted by local inhabitants will mobilise supporters and votes that will contribute to a position of power in the formal political field. Hence, local politicians are dependent upon their standing in the neighbourhood and among its inhabitants. Indeed, there seems to be a mutual dependency in the relations between politicians and the inhabitants in Colobane which are marked by a logic of practice of negotiated exchanges of resources. The local politicians struggle for the symbolic power of legitimate authority and access to material resources, and the inhabitants of the neighbourhood strive for economic capital in the form of jobs, money and goods to cope with the harsh material conditions of everyday life. In local network politics, the relational practices of inhabitants and political representatives take place through horizontal and vertical network relations. These serve as arenas for establishing and nurturing a broad variety of social relationships across social fields to promote their interests and to accumulate or exchange political, economic, social and symbolic capital.

The politicians have several sources and strategies for gaining legitimacy as a representative of local inhabitants. For instance, it is necessary to demonstrate belonging to and engagement for the neighbourhood and its inhabitants. As domination and representation always requires justification to be recognised as legitimate, the politician must act in ways that resonate with the habitus of those he or she needs to mobilise. In the neighbourhood of Colobane, marked by material scarcity, addressing the living conditions of the inhabitants by responding to the lack of physical and social infrastructure in the commune will boost the symbolic power of a politician. Likewise, support of and engagement in local associations that work for the benefit of the neighbourhood and its inhabitants is of great importance. As an example, one of the deputy mayors of the commune presented himself as the honorary president of a youth association in the neighbourhood. He said he had a wish to do something positive for the youth of Colobane, and so became one of the founders of the association. Yet, when asked further about the association and its activities, it is obvious that he is not well informed. Later, one of the leaders of the association denied that he was the honorary president. The politician has morally supported the association and given some advice, but has not been involved in any other way. Hence, it seems as if this politician has used his relation to a community



association to portray himself as belonging to and working hard for the neighbourhood, as he knows this would give him respect and authority.

Politicians also achieve recognition through assisting individual inhabitants with money and material assets to secure basic needs and everyday expenses related to food, water, fuel or health care. As mentioned in the first section of this chapter, inhabitants build relations with and approach politicians and representatives of the commune in their everyday lives, as part of their multi-activity to secure survival and much needed material resources. Faced with such requests, local politicians give concessions and distribute money and other resources, but only in return for political support that will help them build an electoral constituency and access political positions. Thus, the economic capital and effort of the politician is provided only in return for political capital in terms of the symbolic recognition, political allegiance and votes of the inhabitants.

Both inhabitants and local politicians labour to establish personal relations that may promote their interests and secure gains when they struggle and negotiate for access to crucial material and symbolic resources. The practices and logic of local politics, just as those of national politics (see chapter 4), demonstrate that economic capital is a further stake of the political field besides the political capital of political representation. This reflects the material basis of politics; a general scarcity of resources. For local politicians, this means that if they manage to achieve a position within a political party, the *commune d'arrondissement* or other state structures, this provides not only political power, but also access to economic and material resources that can be used in the quest for legitimate authority. The example at the beginning of this chapter illustrates this. The local politician who distributed rice to her contacts and supporters had obtained this opportunity due to her strong position in the local branch of the PDS and within a particular faction of the party. She was appointed by the town council of Dakar, also with a PDS majority, to distribute a load of rice. As a result, people came to get their share, but also to thank and praise her. Such approval and the subsequent accounts circulating in the neighbourhood provides symbolic capital as a legitimate representative, but also oblige the politicians to keep up the flow of resources to nurture and maintain the useful relations and political clientele. This example also demonstrates how financial resources from the institutions of the formal political field are distributed through local networks and used in the negotiations for symbolic representation by individual politicians. The institutionalised economic capital is converted into individual symbolic and political capital through the

recognition granted by the inhabitants receiving the material assistance.

### ***Inequality, but logic of flexibility***

Relations and exchanges between politicians and local inhabitants, either on an individual basis or through associations, have often been represented as clientelist, holding a fixed logic where the dominating patron-politician defines and dictates the dominated client-inhabitant. Patron-client relations are by definition built on asymmetrical power relations. Politicians who hold positions of power with access to resources often take the role of a patron in relation to inhabitants, like when they approach them prior to an election to acquire personal support and votes for their party. Both men and women of various ages stated in conversations and interviews that they have experienced this and also claimed that people have been paid by politicians to vote for their party. During the PS regime, for instance, it was common for party representatives from outside the neighbourhood to come to Colobane during election campaigns. They distributed food, fabric and in some cases money to recruit party activists and political supporters and to secure votes.

Local politicians also use promises of future individual and collective benefits and assistance to gain political support. This is possible, as it is well-known how a position in the *commune d'arrondissement* or a political party provides access to different kinds of resources and the inhabitants have experienced how political supporters and clients might gain rewards if they help a local politician into such a position. It is all part of a logic of exchanges, where the client helped by the political patron is obliged to provide support for his or her political candidature and/ or provide votes for the party at elections. These relations help build the power, recognition and legitimacy of the politicians as important authorities in the area. Such practices thus portray one of the parties of the relation as the strong patron and the other as the receiving client to the inhabitants of Colobane and other participants in the political network system. This has great symbolic value for the patron, who is represented as the powerful provider, taking care of the other. However, the patron is dependent on the client to uphold this image and she or he has certain obligations towards the clients that involve the material assistance provided being converted to symbolic recognition. Thus, patron-client relations are often also initiated by individuals who take the client position when they want the material assistance and protection of a patron.

One municipal councillor is hesitant to leave his house at times. He says he knows he will be approached by 'clients' and the expectations they have of him feel like a burden. When he simply walks down the street of the neighbourhood and some of the local women spot him and cross the street to salute him properly, he knows they are expecting 'a little something', like a bank-note in their hand. As he does not have a salary as a councillor and is a retired person, he does not have the resources necessary to meet the expectations around him when having to use his own scarce resources to meet their demands. He really wants a change in these political expectations and practices, and not only for his own sake. He thinks that if there is to be any real political change, not only do politicians have to change their ways and priorities, but there also has to be a break in political expectations and practices of the population. If not, the more or less unfair and corrupt system of the last 40 years will persist. While he complains about these prolonged political practices, he also complies with the logic and plays his part as a patron, although hesitantly. He also admits that he draws on established relations and puts himself in a client position to obtain assistance in difficult situations, and that he has been resentful when not helped himself.

As demonstrated by this example, patrons may get their role through their position of power and through the initiation of such a relationship by someone who takes on the client position. A lot of politicians explain this phenomenon with reference to the political practices of the past, forming the main political system during the PS era. During this period, substantial party and state resources were used to reward supporters, maintain political hegemony or 'buy' political legitimacy (confirmed by Beck (1996) on the national scale). This heritage is now affecting the politicians of the *Alternance* as there are continued expectations; the inhabitants and political supporters are used to local leaders having resources to assist them economically. Thus, even though it is supposed to be a new period marked by transparency and accountability, the party politicians and elected representatives encounter a certain pressure to continue such relational practices and their exchanges. However, in this new era most politicians and state representatives at the local level are not provided with funding for such purposes to the same degree as during the PS regime. This means that quite a few of them have to rely on their own resources to fulfil their obligations and consequently feel it as a great burden.

Hence, although there are inequalities of power between patrons and clients, actual relations between local politicians and the inhabitants are often more dynamic and complex than they

appear or as less one-sided than is often presented. While the local politicians may secure the political support and recognition from clients, the inhabitants of Colobane also strategically use patron-client relations to promote their own interests. Even though they operate within and are confined by the logic of patron-client relations, such relations and the political network system constitute not only political limitations, but also opportunities for political actors. Such relations serve as political arenas for inventive and strategic political, social, religious and economic practices. In the political network system, patrons and clients engage and negotiate for access to and exchange of different kinds of capital. There are rights, duties and obligations for both parties of the relation, which therefore implies that the patron does not always take advantage of the client. By tactically trying to establish themselves as clients to obtain crucial material resources through the obligations that are placed on the patron, inhabitants of Colobane actively participate in local politics and engage in relation to the local state, despite structural limitations and inequalities of power. They play on the routinised logic and systems of clientelism, which mainly involves both building and nurturing relations to local politicians and accepting their approaches for negotiations over the exchange of resources (Beck 1996, 1999, 2008, Prag 2004). Thus, Beck (2008) describes patron-client relationships as marked by both inequality and reciprocity, and emphasises how they may also provide inclusion, political access and influence for actors holding client positions.

Despite the obligations that rest on the different parties of the patron-client relation, the flexibility of the system means that there is a constant negotiation of the concrete conditions of such relations and the resulting practices forming local network politics. Nevertheless, inherent in this political network system is the fact that the social relationships and the affiliated exchange of resources are not constant. In Bourdieu's words (1986), social relationships and the exchanges that consecrate them involves a certain uncertainty. One of the parties may withdraw from the relationship or fail to respond to the engagement and investment of the other party. In local politics, if a politician as patron breaks off the relationship or fails to provide support, he or she may risk losing support and legitimacy, as the individual in the client position loses an important provider of needed material resources. This is reported to have happened quite frequently under the PS regime, particularly among politicians who did not belong to the neighbourhood. They visited Colobane to seek support and mobilise political activists before elections. Both individual and collective promises were made by politicians in exchange for support for their individual candidatures or their political party. However, people seem to have a sceptical attitude towards them, as they have

repeatedly experienced such non-local patron politicians breaking their promises.

This is less likely to occur when the social relation is based on prolonged and close contact between a local politician and an inhabitant of the neighbourhood. In this case there is more at risk for the politician if he or she completely withdraws from the relation or evades fulfilling promises and obligations without a good reason. This will be reported to family, neighbours and others, impairing the reputation and legitimacy of the politicians, and so weakening their symbolic and political capital. They risk losing the legitimacy and recognition needed to uphold their positions of power. It is because of the uncertainty of the system that the inhabitants of Colobane engage in multi-activity. This means that they try to nurture as many relations and engage in as many fields as possible to secure their position, power and access to resources. Constantly making and nurturing multiple social relations seems vital, either to directly approach personal contacts or use an intermediary as a means to get in touch with a particular individual. The use of personal relations and intermediaries to attain needed resources is a main characteristic of network politics and constitutes the system by which people are related through social relationships and co-existing networks of various social fields.

### ***The work of networks***

As argued above, in local network politics, personal contacts and social networks are of crucial importance, both with regard to the internal competition among the elites of the local political field and in the relational practices and negotiations between the inhabitants of Colobane and local politicians. They are vital both for the politicians working for legitimate authority and a political position with access to economic resources, and for the inhabitants who are in need of economic support and hope to influence political decisions. The social capital of personal relationships and social networks is the basis of the exchanges for material and symbolic resources, and thus also both economic and political capital. Therefore, the development and nurturing of social relationships is not restricted to individual exchanges, but holds great potential also with regard to the associational life in the neighbourhood. Women's groups, youth organisations and religious associations all play important roles in the everyday lives of the inhabitants of the neighbourhood, as means of social interaction and of addressing their material needs through mutual help and solidarity (see also chapters 8, 10 and 11). However, they certainly also constitute arenas for both political criticism and mobilisation.

Various local associations are very much a part of the local political network system and constitute political arenas for the playing of not only horizontal relations, but also vertical patron-client roles, used by both local politicians and inhabitants in their quest for needed resources and power.

The importance of associations has certainly not been ignored by the politicians, for whom the associations might serve as political channels for building and maintaining a political clientele. Many of the politicians living in Colobane are active in one or several of its associations, and a municipal councillor who is actively engaged in several women's groups and a *dahira* claims that this is vital for politicians, who need to be where people meet and important questions are raised. In addition, it gives her a possibility to connect to, build and nurture a political clientele. Thus, for local politicians, membership or leadership in local associations secure arenas for network politics and the mobilisation of political support and votes. However, as individual exchanges, these advantages and the needed political authority do not come without returning favours. Associational members expect the politicians to promote their interests in the *commune d'arrondissement* and to assist them in various situations. Only by a mutual exchange of goods and services may the politicians obtain support as legitimate representatives. One female politician explains how she has helped her women's group with two sewing machines to secure income generation and vocational training for members, as well as having secured funds to her *dahira* through her position and connections in a party and various state institutions.

In addition, associational leaders hold potential political capital as recognised and legitimate representatives of the members. As they already possess the symbolic authority that is critical and partly deficient among politicians, local sections of various political parties have been active in trying to incorporate associational leaders in Colobane into their ranks. For instance, several leaders of women's associations have been recruited into party politics and so managed both to secure supporters and votes for the party among their members and to acquire funding for the association, or at least small benefits for the women to whom they are accountable. However, some of them have withdrawn from party politics as they considered it to harm their respect and position among members.

The political engagement of associational leaders and the engagement of local politicians in local associations provide the inhabitants of Colobane as members with an additional arena

for state-society relations, and further possibilities for securing much needed material resources (see chapters 8, 10 and 11). In addition to benefiting from the mutual solidarity among associational members and the general engagement of the politician for the association, they may activate two different, but mutually enforcing, logics in an eventual personal demand for material assistance; that of horizontal and vertical relations respectively. As explained in several interviews, members of a women's group may solicit a politician engaged in the group by appealing to her both as a friend and as a fellow member, bound together by common interests and internal solidarity rules. At the same time, they may play out their role as the client of this political patron, and so use the unequal, vertical relations between them.

Network politics entails an exchange of resources among participants through negotiations and contestations both in the private and public spheres. For the inhabitants of Colobane, coping with the problems of everyday life is of primary importance. For the representatives of the local state, political will and action to promote the interests of the inhabitants of the area and secure improvements of the situation in the neighbourhood is necessary to uphold political legitimacy after the success of the *Alternance*. So, it seems, is also the redistribution and individual exchanges of material resources for the needed political support. Thus, there are both continuities as well as changes in local state-society relations and the resulting political practices.

## **Changing continuities in local network politics**

The material deprivation experienced by most residents in the neighbourhood gives a prominent place to material self-interests in everyday local political relations and practices. Local state-society relations and practices revolve around the everyday problems of livelihood and the strategies regarding positions in the political network system, and involve personalised relations and their exchanges. In the process, these practices have the aggregate and unintended consequences of reproducing the political situation and system in general. This does not mean, however, that there is an absence of more general political aims and interests. The popular mobilisation related to the *Alternance* and the victory of the oppositional coalition led by the PDS at all levels signalled the desire and demands for both a

solution to the socio-economic crisis and change of political regime (Diop 2006, Mbow 2008). The *Alternance* showed the population that they could make a change through their participation and involvement, and gave a sense of hope that their interests and demands would receive attention from the new government and state representatives (Creevey et al. 2005, Diop et al. 2000, Galvan 2001, Gellar 2005).

Through the local elections of 2002, the majority of the inhabitants of Colobane also signalled the wish for local political change and the desire to possess real influence on political decisions. They expressed their desire to have a say in local political matters and their political discourse called for local politicians and state representatives to combine forces with traditional and religious local authorities and the variety of associations in their management of the commune. The inhabitants wished for local politics reflecting their needs and choices, and expressed the necessity of local cooperation to solve the problems and enhance the potential of the neighbourhood. With the mobilisation for and realisation of regime change at national and local levels came the anticipation and discourse of a new form of politics with accountable politicians, fair distribution of resources, transparency in politics and abolition of corruption. As mentioned above, politics and party politicians have generally been looked upon with scepticism, and the institutions of the formal political field marked by malpractice, inefficiencies and lack of transparency. The inhabitants portray party and state representatives as a corrupt breed, 'eating' all the resources and money they get hold of, working only for personal profit. The *Alternance* brought hope and expectations that this would end, as a new discourse on fair distribution and accountable politicians through a good and fair state was at the forefront. Unfortunately, these expectations seem to have been largely replaced by disappointment and a general feeling of deception when it comes to real changes in political practices at the local level.

Although negative attitudes are expressed towards local state representatives and their legitimacy is seriously questioned at times, people do engage in network relations with representatives of the local state. The relations and practices between inhabitants and state officials and politicians at the local level contain both continuities and some changes. The new political discourse has transformed the statements and positions of at least some local politicians and state representatives. It has also contributed to an increased awareness among people about their rights and the intended functioning of the local state. People seem disappointed by the lack of change, although there are politicians with intentions of



implementing the ideas reflected in these discourses. In this situation, both local popular actors and representatives of the local state seem to fall back into the established practices.

This means that both local inhabitants and local political elites are caught in a political paradox. Although the interests in a new form of politics are clear and articulated, both parties seem to negotiate their interests in regard to two co-existing and overlapping systems; the established patron-client relations of the political network system and the potentially democratic and decentralised new system that is articulated in the new political discourses and modest political reforms. Local politicians seem to be caught between different demands. On the one hand is the pressure for a new, transparent and accountable form of local politics, which in time might counter the negative attitudes towards politicians, party politics and the state, and thus reconstruct their legitimacy. On the other hand, the conventional logic of local politics imposes the expectation that politicians who gain access to resources through their political positions should distribute these to family, friends, contacts and supporters. The regime change does not mean that politicians are relieved of the burden of providing concessions to their personal and political relations, especially since they have provided critical support through the fight for a political change of regime.

The legacy of clientelist relations through local and personal political networks, which was a characteristic feature of the PS state, seems to be a defining characteristic of local state-society relations also after the change of regime. The continuities in the underlying material realities of Senegalese politics, and the entrenched practices of neo-patrimonialism, do not change so momentarily (Beck 1996, Cruise O'Brien 2003). Clientelist practices persist (Prag 2004). The analysis of local state-society relation in Colobane demonstrates that the clientelist relations between inhabitants and local politicians and representatives of the commune still exist and continue to be initiated by both parties of such relations. Herein is a current paradox of local politics: local popular and elite actors are actually reconstructing the practices they want to abolish by sustaining established clientelist relations. The unintended consequence of individual strategies to address everyday self-interest is the reproduction of political practices that prevent the fulfilment of more general and long-term goals of political transformation. Thus, the regime change of the *Alternance* has by now taken on the character of 'changing continuity', a situation where the transformations towards democratisation are combined with reproduced political practices that constrain the possibilities of substantive political change.



## 8. Religious associations in Colobane

Islam has a prominent place in Senegalese society. The marabouts of Sufi orders have served as intermediaries in state-society relations, and their relations with their followers have formed the basis of the post-colonial social contract (see chapter 4). Islam has marked social organisation, economic networks and political arrangements also at the local level. Religion is part of the population's everyday life, not only because it penetrates society and informs attitudes and practices on a general basis across societal fields, but also because participation in religious associations is important in the lives and practices of individuals. Collective organisation and mobilisation is a central feature of Senegalese society and has a long history. In the last few decades, especially in urban areas, there has been a proliferation of collective associations, like youth organisations, religious associations and women's groups (Cruise O'Brien 2003, Diop 2002). Religious associations play a central role for people living in the neighbourhood of Colobane, where numerous religious associations are present. The majority are *dahiras*, related to different Sufi orders and their marabouts. However, the collective organisations of the local religious field also include local sections of the Catholic movement, the Moustarchidine movement and the Al-Fallah movement. Thus, there is a variety of religious opinions and associations in the neighbourhood, and a certain rivalry between them.

The aim of this chapter is to examine the politics and functions of the religious associations in Colobane. It is argued that, in addition to the apparent religious purposes, they also have vital socio-economic roles and more direct political implications through intersections with local and national political fields. The local religious field is thus an arena not only for religious practice, but also social and political practices. It is part of the local political space and religious associations constitute arenas for local network politics. The first section of the chapter accounts for the religious functions of these associations, such as the exercise and instruction of religion. Here, the vertical relation to religious leaders and the hierarchy of movements is discussed. The following section examines the horizontal bonds among religious followers, and how religious associations are also vital arenas for socialising that make it possible for members to build and mobilise a social network that in turn may help them to secure needed resources. The mutual help and solidarity among members often go along with institutional practices of assistance and possible support from religious leaders. The last section analyses the direct links to the local political field as well as how the politics of religious associations have implications for and relate to national politics. Locally, they

serve as arenas for patron-client relations between local politicians and associational members (see chapter 7). Religious collective organisation also has national political implications, as demonstrated in chapter 4, where it was argued that the mediation of marabouts between political authorities and the population has embodied a social contract. Some religious movements constitute vital political forces or pressure groups in Senegalese politics. Thus, due to the additional roles and functions of religious associations, engagement in them involves the investment of and potential profit from both symbolic, social and economic capital, relevant not only in the religious field, but in the politics of the everyday life of inhabitants.

### ***Dahiras and religious movements***

Colobane has several *dahiras* of various sizes. They belong to different Sufi orders and assemble their followers or that of a particular marabout mainly on the basis of place of residence (the neighbourhood), although one Mouride *dahira* is primarily based on workplace (most members work in the market of Colobane). The *dahiras* generally have weekly meetings, either in a regular location, like the house of the leader, or on a rotational basis in members' houses. This depends on the size of the *dahira* and the number of members regularly attending meetings. As an example, one Mouride *dahira* has about 200 members, and there may be up to 90 people present at the weekly meetings. The president, who hosts the meetings in her house or yard, says that some members are official and active, while others are informal members, only occasionally participating in the activities of the *dahira*. This *dahira* has both male and female members of various ages, but it is the women who are the most active participants and in the majority. The most central aspects of the *dahira* are following the recommendations of the marabout and promoting Islam and mutual help among members, according to the president. Also in another *dahira* of the neighbourhood, the leader emphasises the creation of union and solidarity among members to make them practise their religion and help each other as a main goal. This *dahira* has about 60 male members, of which about 30 participate in the weekly activities.

The neighbourhood also has a local community group of the Catholic movement. It has about 100 members, but only about 30 of these are active and present at all meetings. The members are both male and female and of various ages, but it is the youth and women who are most actively involved. However, as part of a national movement, this local group is controlled and

co-ordinated by regional and national offices of the Catholic movement. It is one of 15 community units within the parish. The unit in Colobane arranges prayer-gatherings twice a week in the home of one of the most active families. In addition, there are two monthly meetings which are organised in the homes of the members who take turns to host the congregation. According to members and leaders, the activities of this local unit of the Catholic movement are about religious worship, socialisation and mutual help among members.

The Al-Fallah movement, promoting a reformist Islam, has a local unit in Colobane, which is also the location of the national headquarters of the movement. Men were in the majority when this local unit was established, but there are now more female members. A local leader holds that the most active are youths between 15 and 25 years old. The local unit of Colobane has various sub-sections according to age and gender, and they all have regular meetings where religion is practised, religious principles taught and social themes discussed. All such local activities are related to the programmes and decisions of the national office of the movement. As the local unit in Colobane has access to the facilities of the headquarters of the movement, its school, mosque and conference rooms are used for educational purposes. According to a local representative, the goal of the movement is to inform people on Islam and to overcome internal differences to bring people closer together, as one unified Muslim group. To achieve this, the movement abstains from harsh critique of popular Sufi Islam, and arranges numerous educational and social activities to mobilise members and inform them of the religious alternative the movement offers.

There is also a section of the Moustarchidine movement in Colobane. The movement is related to the Tivaouvane branch of the Tidjaniya order, and its name, *Dahiratoul Moustarchidine wal Moustarchidaty* (young boys and girls living the right way/ following the right path) designates it as a *dahira*. However, the movement is informed by reformist Islam and has traits from newer forms of religious organisation (see chapter 4). The local section in Colobane was established in the 1970s and now has more than 100 members divided into four sub-sections according to age and gender. Also here, there is a predominance of young people and women in the membership. A leader of a sub-section for women explains how all local sections must relate to the national leadership, which decides the educational focus and the social activities. At the weekly meetings of this local section, just over 30 women participate regularly, and they have discussions on Islam in contemporary Senegal as well as religious

worship and teaching. This is to achieve the goal of helping members to become practising and good Muslims who understand what is expected of them in contemporary society, according to a local leader.

## Religious activities and functions

Religious associations provide indispensable religious support and instruction (Piga 2002). The regular weekly, or sometimes monthly, meetings of the religious associations in Colobane are all first and foremost dedicated to religious worship and practice, as well as religious instruction and discussions. The *dahiras* often arrange prayers and religious singing, accompanied by recitation of the Koran and the order-specific prayers and writings of their saints. For instance, the Mourides sing and recite the Qasaides written by the founder, Cheikh Amadou Bamba. Leaders and members of the various *dahiras* in the neighbourhood hold religious practice and education as their objective and core activities. For instance, the president of a Khadre *dahira* explains how they initiated the *dahira* to encourage people to practise their religion regularly. Their goal was to educate the young, teach them about the hierarchy between marabout and follower, and to recruit them to the Khadre order ‘before other groups got to them’, in her words. As this is one of the smaller Sufi orders of Senegal, she wanted to mobilise followers and show the activities of the brotherhood in the surrounding area.

Most leaders of the local religious associations, both *dahiras* and sections of the religious movements, highlight that the main goal of their association is to unite believers and teach them about their religion to help them to practise it properly and regularly. However, religious instruction and educational activities are particularly prominent in the reformist inspired movements, where the national management promotes religious training and formulates educational programmes. A representative of the Al-Fallah movement in Colobane explains how all local sections, in addition to the regular religious practice, arrange events and discussions of religious texts and current issues, such as the social and marital issues of women in relation to Islam. As the local section in Colobane has good access to the headquarters, they profit from the centrally organised religious and educational activities of the movement, too. The Al-Fallah movement regularly organises religious seminars in the

conference facilities of their headquarters in Colobane. Here, Islamic conferences, Arabic classes and religious lectures are arranged on a regular basis. This is much like the ideas and activities of the Moustarchidine movement. Both these reformist inspired movements focus heavily on religious education. There is instruction in relation to the Koran, the Hadith and debate on religion in contemporary Senegalese society through regular weekly meetings and special arrangements. This is in line with their goal of ‘helping people to become practising and good Muslims and to understand the principles of the faith’, as put by a local representative of the Moustarchidin movement.

There are also regional or national events arranged particularly by the religious movements, such as the annual University of Ramadan coordinated by the Moustarchidine movement in Dakar. During this event there are diverse presentations on religious themes, where university professors and religiously educated people come to contribute and answer questions along with the leaders and marabouts of the movement. Among the activities of the religious associations in Colobane are also special events that take place with the Muslim celebrations of Tamxarit (Muslim new year) and Tabaski (festival of sacrifice, Eid al-Adha). Thus, through membership and participation in a religious association, members receive religious instruction and the opportunity to participate in a variety of regular and extraordinary religious activities and practices. In the *dahiras*, visits from their marabouts to the neighbourhood *dahiras* and the arranged pilgrimages, *ziaras*, to the holy capitals of their brotherhood or the homes of marabouts are also of special importance and among the central religious activities.

### ***The relations with religious authorities and hierarchy***

Relations and contact with religious authorities and institutions representing the respective hierarchies of the various religious associations in Colobane are also among their religious practices. As mentioned above and in chapter 4, all *dahiras* are established for and with a relation to the *khalife générale* (the superior leader) or another marabout of a Sufi order. To give an example, a Mouride *dahira* of the neighbourhood has good and direct links to Serigne Saliou Mbacke, who was the *khalife générale* at the time of the fieldwork. Another Mouride *dahira* is related to the marabout Serigne Mortala, the youngest, and at the time of the fieldwork, last of the sons of the founder of the Mouride order, then expected to become the next *khalife générale* after Serigne Saliou. In addition, Sokhna Mame Fatou Mbacke, daughter

of Serigne Fallou (a past *khalifa* of the Mourides), is their honorary president. *Sohknas*, or female marabouts, are not very common, but do exist (Mbow 1997). They are often daughters or wives of prominent marabouts, and are presented as ideals for female disciples to identify with and follow (Bop 2005, Creevey 1996, Rosander 1997c).

As mentioned in chapter 4, the rurally based religious institution of the *daara* played a decisive role in the relations between marabout and disciple in the past. *Daaras* were established and run by marabouts, who directed the lives of their rural disciples (Beck 1996, Cruise O'Brien 1975, 2003, Magassouba 1985). Now, the *dahira* is more prominent due to the decline in agriculture and resulting urbanisation and migration. According to Cruise O'Brien (2003), *dahiras* involve an independent and collective contribution from the followers and thus imply a democratic principle. This is supported by several *dahira* presidents in Colobane, who explain how *dahiras* are established and controlled by the religious followers alone. In this sense, they constitute a form of religious organisation initiated from below and also a more unbound relation to the marabout (Gellar 2005, Piga 2002). However, the connection to a marabout and brotherhood is still at the basis of the *dahiras*, as illustrated above. The vertical bonds and relations between marabout and followers are respected and nurtured through various religious activities, such as visits from the marabouts to neighbourhood *dahiras* and visits by *dahira* delegations and members to the holy places of the brotherhood or houses of marabouts (Villalon 2007).

Most *dahiras* try to arrange a reception and a local event in the neighbourhood to welcome their marabout or another representative of the brotherhood. Through such arrangements both the collective and individual affiliation of members to the marabout and brotherhood is strengthened. For instance, the president of one of the *dahiras* in Colobane tries to arrange for their marabout to visit their *dahira* once a year (*ngan*) so the *dahira* and its members may express their gratitude. They then hold a day of prayers, religious ceremonies, discussions and good meals. In addition, the pilgrimages to the holy places or 'capitals' of the brotherhoods and/or the homes of their marabouts are vital to uphold the relation with the marabout and brotherhood, both for the *dahira* as a collective unity and for individual members (Cruise O'Brien 2003). They are supposed to be beneficial to the religious followers. As explained by leaders of *dahiras* in Colobane, the pilgrimage to the holy places of the brotherhood and meeting with the marabout is of special importance for the religious followers. The visit and the prayers and blessing of the marabout are thought to strengthen the followers; they are



supposed to give access to and a part of the blessing of God, through the *baraka*, that is the mystical powers and blessing, of their marabout. In addition, it is thought to provide good luck, fulfil the wishes and pleas of pilgrims and to involve a certain delegated religious wisdom and recognition, all of which is believed to be beneficial for the believer in general ways and also to help with personal problems (Rosander 2001a, 2003, 2006). According to the leaders of several *dahiras* in Colobane, the *ziara* or pilgrimage may and is often performed at the time of the annual celebration of the brotherhoods, like the Maggal of the Mourides in Touba or Gammou of the Tidjans in Tivaouane, particularly when the *dahira* is affiliated to a brotherhood in general and/ or its *khalife générale*. Other *dahiras* visit the specific marabout they are related to in his home, on or independently of these celebrations.

The religious benefits of the relation to the marabout and brotherhood for the followers are thus experienced to be religious blessing, recognition and fortune. But there are advantages and profits for the religious authorities and institutions as well. The described receptions and pilgrimages are arranged to express the respect for and gratitude towards the marabout and brotherhood, and are thus extremely important for them. They provide the religious leaders and institutions with recognition and grant legitimacy to their authority and dominance, thus providing vital religious capital and power that are important for the marabout and brotherhood to attract and keep religious followers. It may strengthen them with regard to the internal competition among the authorities and institutions of the religious field, too, such as in relation to other marabouts, other brotherhoods and the alternatives of reformist Islam. In addition, as discussed in chapter 4, it is the relations to and recognition provided by their followers that has provided the marabouts with their powerful position in Senegalese society and thus also in relation to the political authorities. It is the basis of the Senegalese social contract (Cruise O'Brien 1992), and what has helped the marabouts and brotherhoods gain access to various resources also in their struggles and negotiations with the state. Marabouts and brotherhoods do also receive economic support from their followers and their *dahiras*.

While the religious follower receives the religious grace of the marabout and his guarantee of the entrance into paradise, the marabouts obtain both the symbolic capital of recognition and legitimate religious authority. However, the negotiated exchange of resources, at least in the Mouride brotherhood, also involves providing the marabouts and thus brotherhoods with economic capital. It is often the *ziara* which is the occasion when the *dahiras* offer their annual gift to their marabout (Cruise O'Brien 2002d). Meetings between marabouts and

followers often involve a situation of capital exchange. Marabouts receive symbolic and economic capital in the form of honour, recognition and money gifts from *dahiras* and disciples, who get religious and symbolic capital through the prayers and religious blessing of the marabout (Rosander 2001b, 2006). The leaders of Mouride *dahiras* in Colobane explain how the money is gathered through weekly or monthly collections among the members throughout the year, to be handed over as a lump sum when the marabout is visited by a delegation from the *dahira*. Both leaders and religious followers of Mouride *dahiras* explain this financial gift as a token of their sympathy and allegiance; it is how they honour their marabout and brotherhood. For religious followers and *dahiras* of the diaspora, the *addiya* or money gift to the marabout is often donated when the marabout of the *dahira* or one representing the brotherhood is visiting their disciples abroad (Rosander 2006). The income from *dahiras* and followers is a great source of revenue for the Mouride brotherhood and its marabouts. It is this mutual dependency and exchange of material and symbolic resources that strengthens the relations between religious followers and religious authorities and might provide benefits for both parties.

The religious hierarchy, and the roles of and relations to the authorities and institutions of the movements, vary among the religious movements present in Colobane. Although personalised relations to religious authorities do not exist in the same manner as in the *dahiras*, the Moustarchidine movement, as part of the Tidjania order, has a somewhat different position. Here, the personalised national leadership consists of two marabouts, Cheick Tidiane Sy and Moustpha Sy (see chapter 4). Still, the leader of a sub-section of the Moustarchidine movement in Colobane holds that the members of the movement do not engage in any kind of fundraising for their marabout, the eventual economic capital raised by members is put into the structure and activities of the movement as a whole. The local sections of religious movements present in Colobane are part of highly structured organisations with a strong regional and national hierarchy. This means that they are structured and initiated by the central offices of the respective movements, according to local representatives, and thus not initiated by local followers in the same manner as the *dahiras*. They must plan and adapt their activities to the programme and regulations of the national movement and relate to its 'policy', in religious matters, organisational structure and sometimes political guidelines. While the organisational hierarchy is strong and highly controlling of local sections and units through promoting official programmes and activities, the religious and organisational leaders at the top of the hierarchy are dependent upon their local units and members. The power of

the movements is highly related to the number of followers or members.

## **The social and economic practices of religious associations**

Although the religious associations of the neighbourhood first and foremost serve religious purposes, conduct religious activities and have religious goals, they also generate a range of social and economic practices, and thus hold critical social and economic functions, too. The members form vital social networks in a religious setting, strengthening the union between followers.

Religious associations are arenas for socialisation and the union of fellow believers in the neighbourhood of Colobane. All religious associations, both *dahiras* and the local groups of religious movements, and their regular meetings and activities constitute places of congregation for the members. One *dahira* leader explains how meetings are important for socialising among members, as they not only practise religion together, but also inform each other and discuss events of their everyday lives, big and small, such as the preparation of various ceremonies. *Dahiras* and their meetings form social arenas outside the home and workplace, where social relations are built and friendship and contacts established in a religious context (Antoine et al. 1995, Babou 2002, Piga 2002). Indeed, members, representatives and leaders of the local religious associations in Colobane all hold that the membership and participation in religious associations provide the religious followers with a critical social network; a large group of contacts, friends, acquaintances and fellow believers, all connected through the religious associations. This is granted special recognition and importance through the religious frame, as union and solidarity is promoted by Islam, as the president of a *dahira* in Colobane explained.

Personal relations and networks seem to be the basis of the establishment of *dahiras*, too, as they are initiated by the religious followers themselves. For instance, one of the *dahiras* in Colobane was formed after those who came to be its initiators met at a baptism ceremony in a mutual friend's house. Talking and discussing religious issues, the five men found commonalities among them, as they were all Mourides and worked in the market in Colobane. They wanted to engage religiously, and decided to start the *dahira* to mobilise fellow

Mourides in the market and make them respect and follow the recommendations of Serigne Touba, the founder of Mouridism. The founding of another *dahira* of the neighbourhood illustrates the importance of a social network for mobilisation and organisation. According to its president, she was the leader of a savings group composed mostly of young women living in Colobane that was transformed into a *dahira* as the members wanted to bring religion into their activities. The existing members and the habit of organising and holding meetings, along with the established solidarity and unity of the group, facilitated the establishment of the *dahira*, serving as a kind of mobilisation structure for the religious activities. The fact that most of the members of the savings group were relatives or already belonged to the same order eased the process.

The membership and participation in a religious association is obviously of great social importance as it constitutes part of the social network of members, thus providing them with vital social capital that can be used when needed. Indeed, their organisation and logic not only involves religious worship and instruction, but also vital socio-economic functions through the mutual help between fellow believers. There is no doubt that the engagement of religious followers in the religious associations of the neighbourhood is both related to their wish for religious practice and instruction, and promoted by the strong bonds and solidarity among its members, as explained by leaders and members of these local associations. At the national level, the vibrant associational life is seen as part of a dynamics of autonomy in relation to the Senegalese state (Diop 2002), as it demonstrates the ability of the citizens of Senegal to find their own solution to socio-economic problems, especially in the context of religious collective organisation (Cruise O'Brien 2003, Piga 2002).

Members and leaders in the religious associations of Colobane highlight the unity and solidarity among members as important objectives and aspects of their associations, and many argue it to be according to religious recommendations. In both *dahiras* and the various religious movements, the aspect of socio-economic assistance underpinned by the principles of mutual aid and solidarity is seen as part of the religion, and the act of helping others as a religious merit and a good quality. The president of a Mouride *dahira* holds that as the principle of reciprocal assistance is central and seen as a virtue in Islam, he highlights it as something that will bring people happiness, along with prayer and work. He holds that the core ideas of a *dahira* are for members to share joys and sorrows, and to help each other find solutions to problems. Especially *dahira* representatives hold the mutual help among the

members as a main characteristic and aim, in addition to the religious practices. While the solidarity among members is promoted by religious recommendations, it is also regulated through social norms and relations. Through joint activities the associational members socialise and get to know each other. Close personal relations may be established and constitute a network of contacts, relations and resources that can be drawn upon and used in times of trouble. In the context of material deprivation, the potential of transforming social capital to economic capital is vital for inhabitants of the neighbourhood of Colobane. And one of their possibilities is to draw upon their social network in the local religious field. Thus, the religious association of Colobane also has vital economic functions as the mutual assistance among members might provide needed material resources, in addition to moral support. They form arenas for network politics.

The mutual help and solidarity between members of the local religious associations in Colobane is both individual, regulated by the individual relations between members, and partly institutionalised, regulated by established practices of the associations and their members. Many examples of these logics were provided by *dahira* members and leaders, particularly in relation to religious and social rites and ceremonies like baptisms, funerals and weddings. They all explain how members inform and help each other with the preparation of these, and how they are often helped by the *dahira* and/or fellow members on such occasions. *Dahiras* might contribute to the religious part of the celebrations by providing the religious music, singing and prayers, but there is often social and economic assistance too. Fellow *dahira* members will often visit and honour the family holding the celebration, and often also provide practical assistance prior to and during the event. In addition, the member arranging the ceremony may expect help to cover parts of the financial costs. The source might be the cash box of the *dahira*, contributions asked for among members but initiated by the *dahira*, and/or individual donations from fellow friends and members in the religious association. This institutionalised and practical logic of solidarity and mutual help is important in people's everyday lives.

Thus, participation in religious associations might present a kind of social security not delivered by state institutions (Piga 2002). In addition to the assistance in the case of ceremonies, the *dahiras* and their members also help out fellow members having problems with housing, unemployment or daily expenses. Cruise O'Brien (2002) confirms and discusses how mutual aid among religious followers contributes to a minimum of social

security for members or religious associations. *Dahira* members in Colobane highlight that requests for help are either put forward in public and thus reacted upon by the *dahira* and all members and leadership, or sometimes only discussed with the closest friends and relations in the association, for the matter to be handled in a more delicate manner. Indeed, this is confirmed by a female *dahira* leader, who holds that membership in the *dahira* makes it possible ask for help on various personal, social or economic problems. Depending on the nature of the problems, they are presented to her as the president of the *dahira*, discussed with the group in a weekly meeting or just discussed and solved among friends. The president of a *dahira* might take an amount from the cash box to help a member, but is usually careful to help discreetly, without making it public and risking embarrassing the members or family who receive help. The leader or members of a *dahira* sometimes even organise a collection in the neighbourhood, the work-place or among other relations to help a fellow member in need. This is exemplified by the leader of a Mouride *dahira* who reported that they have organised collections in the market when members have requested assistance, to draw on the logic of mutual help of the *dahira* as well as that of religion and tradition in general, appealing to fellow members.

The logic of mutual help and socio-economic functions can be seen also in the local sections of the different religious movements in the neighbourhood, although not to the same degree or manner as in the *dahiras*. The local community group of the Catholic movement holds a logic that is quite similar to the one of the *dahiras*, and the local representatives describe how reciprocal assistance among members is important. However, it is explained that this is only an informal practice that has been established over time, due to the close relations between members. It is not related to the movement as a whole. According to a representative of the leadership of the local section in Colobane, they always try to help members or families in a discreet manner when they observe that they experience difficulties. They seldom ask the members to contribute with assistance openly in meetings, but rather approach them individually to find ways to help the family that is in need. Here, like in the *dahiras*, it is the problems of sufficient resources for daily expenses and the extraordinary expense of hosting ceremonies which makes fellow members contribute with money, clothing or practical assistance.

These situations are also confirmed by a local representative of the Moustarchidine movement as circumstances when their section collects money to help the members of the organisation

or other families in the neighbourhood who are in need. In all the religious movements present in Colobane, it seems as if such informal and mutual help among members is coupled with a possible assistance from local leaders or the higher levels of the movements. For instance, the local community unit of the Catholic movement may approach the church of their parish if individual members need material assistance. There are also social programmes and solidarity actions promoted by the national offices of the various religious movements, like visits to hospitals and prisons, the cleaning of mosques/churches and local schools, as well as the distribution of food to destitute people seeking help. As an example, the Catholic movement has established the 'Caritas Senegal', a solidarity initiative of Christian charity both for Muslims and Christians, which has offices at the level of the parishes and centrally. The parish also provides food for the local community unit to distribute to those in need from time to time. In a similar manner, the Al-Fallah movement has become relatively well-known for the support of poor people, arranged at the headquarters in the neighbourhood in Colobane where food and necessary provisions are distributed on a regular basis (Loimeier 2000, Piga 2002). In the Moustarchidine movement, the social programme planned centrally but executed at the local level also has educational aspects. According to a local representative, classes are held in Arabic and special programmes organised to help children and youths with their schoolwork on a regular basis and particularly during the summer holidays. In addition, the sub-section for women has arranged different types of training for young women, like instruction in sewing and cooking and seminars on how women can start their own business and reinvest the income.

### ***Benefits and profits, but also expenses and uncertainty of investment***

Although the religious associations form important arenas for socio-economic assistance and their members may thus secure material benefits, there are also economic expenses related to this participation. The logic of mutual solidarity obliges members to help out their fellow members with practical assistance and economic resources when needed, just as they themselves may ask for or expect the same aid if and when they are in a similar situation. Thus, members must be ready to assist fellow members in various situations. In addition, membership often also involves the more or less regular payment of a contribution. As some inhabitants are members of several local associations, the expenses related to such participation might be a burden. However, it is also part of the engagement in multi-activity that possibly entails having several sources of potential future assistance. On the other hand,

the economic costs related to membership may exclude some inhabitants from joining local associations.

There is often a weekly or monthly subscription to be paid by members and participants in religious associations in Colobane, and some *dahiras* also sell membership cards. There is a certain pressure to contribute regularly and to buy the membership cards, according to members. One Mouride *dahira* sells its cards for 500 f.cfa., but the leader holds that many do not formalise their membership. In the Al-Fallah movement the members pay regular subscriptions, and the women pay a monthly subscription of 200 f.cfa (approx. 0.3 euro) according to the leader of a sub-section for women in the neighbourhood. In addition, members are expected to pay a small contribution to participate in the different activities arranged locally or to help supply food, water or money for excursions. However, big national or regional activities are executed with the finances provided from the movement centrally, acquired partly through external funding, for instance, from Saudi Arabia. In one of the *dahiras* in Colobane, female members are required to pay a weekly subscription of 100 f.cfa., the amount rising to 200 f.cfa. for male members. Another has a weekly contribution of 100 f.cfa., but the president simultaneously encourages those who are able to increase the amount. He reports that the more wealthy members regularly donate higher sums; the members of the *dahira* participate and contribute according to their means.

This means that there are also possibilities for those in problematic situations. Although the economic contributions related to religious associations exclude some people from becoming or staying members, several leaders explain how individuals with limited means can pay a lower monthly fee or may miss payments without facing sanctions. They acknowledge that it may be embarrassing and problematic for some of them, however. According to a representative of the Catholic movement, their monthly subscription is supposed to be 500 f.cfa. (approx. 0.8 euro), but as there have been problems with collecting the money, especially from young members, the sum has been lowered to 250 f.cfa. In the Moustarchidine movement, contributions are voluntary, according to a local representative of a sub-section in Colobane. However, members are encouraged and expected to give some money each month if they can. It is common to contribute regularly, and the resources of the movement mainly consist of the payments of members who also face special collections when local events are arranged.



Overall, the expenses, both material, and the time and energy invested in the movement and its activities, constitute an investment for religious and socio-economic assistance and security and thus access to both symbolic and material resources. There is however always a risk that these investments will not pay off. A few *dahira* leaders report fluctuations in the number of members and in the intensity of activities over time. In one Mouride *dahira*, the number of members has varied between five and 140 members, and there was a period of three years of inactivity before the *dahira* was re-established and they managed to revitalise activities. Another *dahira* had to stop its activities as the original members, who were young women, got married, moved and/ or gained responsibilities that made them unable participate. This insecurity of investment of time, energy and money in religious and social activities is the main reason for the multi-activity of the inhabitants of Colobane; it is part of a diversification for possible future profit and a certain socio-economic security.

While the investment in religious associations is not guaranteed, it most often provides some kind of profit to members, either religiously, socially or economically. However, this does require a general investment in the association, its activities and members. This includes time and energy, as well as practical and material assistance for the association or its members. However, the logic of these religious associations makes these ‘expenses’ worthwhile, as members most often profit both religiously (symbolically) and materially from their membership. This is not only due to the logic of self help and solidarity that marks the close horizontal bonds between members and is institutionalised by the established practices of the associations, benefits from the social arena and valuable contacts in the religious network must also be considered. In addition, the relations to a marabout or the leaders and hierarchy at regional or national levels of the religious movements may be of assistance to members.

Relations with a marabout are beneficial to *dahira* members in several ways, drawing on the vertical relations of the religious institution. The relation and interaction between marabouts and followers is guided by both religious and material guidelines, and often secures material and symbolic profit for both religious guides (as discussed above) and their followers organised in *dahiras*. As mentioned earlier in the chapter, there is spiritual gain for followers in their relation to and contact with their marabout and holy places of their brotherhood. In addition, the marabout may assist them with advice and assistance in social and economic issues. *Dahiras* or individual followers may ask for help and economic resources if needed. The president of one of the Mouride *dahiras* in Colobane explains how it is often the leader of

the *dahira* who passes on the request of a follower to a marabout and who arranges the relationship by serving as an intermediary. She provides the example of how an influential marabout can be of assistance if one of his disciples has problems with the police, to help with bail, for instance, and adds that the marabout may also provide economic assistance by donating money or opening his network to the followers who need it. This means that the good will of the marabout and access to his contacts may help followers find a job, start a business or migrate to another country. As discussed in chapter 4, religious followers are not only thinking about spiritual gain, but also the more material benefits of the symbolic allegiance and financial assistance to their marabout. It is part of the mutuality and negotiations of the relations that they may themselves receive both symbolic and material benefits from their support to their marabout and brotherhood.

### ***The economic networks of Mouridism***

Some of the religious associations present in the neighbourhood also have more explicit economic functions. Particularly in Mouride *dahiras* the networks of concurrent horizontal bonds among followers and robust vertical links to marabouts and the brotherhood have additional economic roles. They incorporate religious followers into not only the religious but also the socio-economic networks and practices of Mouridism.

The leader of a Mouride *dahira* in Colobane compares the Mouride networks to the logic and composition of corporations in the world of business, due to the material resources, competence and economic possibilities aggregated there. The importance of work and resource accumulation is highlighted in this *dahira*, and its president describes the two central logics in Mouridism as prayer and work; to respect the pact with God and to labour. Thus, there is a close link between the religious, social and economic logics and practices in Mouridism (Babou 2002, Rosander 2001b, 2003, 2006). This is related to the work ethic and sanctification of work in this Sufi order (Piga 2002). A *dahira* leader in Colobane holds that it is essential and decisive that Mouride followers co-operate and raise money; not only to support and honour the marabout, but also for the co-organisation, unity and solidarity among members. This may be exemplified by how a representative of a Mouride *dahira* proudly explains how their income increased even when they experienced a loss of members; they managed to assemble followers and motivate them to contribute to the *dahira* and the Mouride network. He thus implicitly explains how the recognition of a *dahira* is related to its

ability to raise money. The networks of mouridism are transnational, as many followers have migrated, and the president of one of the Mouride *dahiras* in Colobane describe how Mourides migrating abroad get help from their marabout and fellow followers in various ways; to obtain a visa, to accumulate enough money for the journey and to get a good religious, social and economic start in the new setting. When a Mouride migrates, he or she is often accommodated by other Mourides and helped to find a job through the religious network contacts of the brotherhoods, marabouts and followers.

The leader of a *dahira* in Colobane told me that former members now stationed abroad help the *dahira* or assist individual members. Thus, religious networks are not only of a local nature, but also have national and transnational extent. If a religious follower needs help to start a business, he might appeal to the marabout for help, through the intermediary of his *dahira*'s president. The marabout may respond positively and mobilise his contacts and the vast network of followers, either by securing a loan, granting access to permits or the state contacts needed to establish a company, or by facilitating connections with business networks in Dakar or other capitals (see also Diop (1981) for the straddling of political, religious and economic fields in Dakar). The strong vertical relations between marabout and follower, coupled with the strong internal and horizontal solidarity among Mouride followers contribute to the strength of the religious networks. Seen in the light of their work ethic and the weight put on economic accumulation, the prominence of economic networks and activities in Mouride networks is not surprising. This prominent economic function of Mouride institutions is expressed also by other researchers, claiming that Mouride *dahiras* may function as a sort of guild for merchants and traders, giving a certain competitive advantage for Mouride followers involved in business or other economic activities (Cruise O'Brien 2002b). However, as highlighted by the leader of the *dahira* in Colobane, religious engagement is seen as essential for economic success and in such Mouride networks religious and economic issues are profoundly interwoven (Rosander 2006).

As mentioned in chapter 4, the economic prosperity of religious associations, and particularly that of marabouts and brotherhoods, is related to the preconditions for and existence of the Senegalese social contract. The state has been dependent upon the brotherhoods and marabouts that have organised the population, for economic profit, state management and in the battle to uphold political legitimacy and secure votes (see chapter 4). This has helped the brotherhoods secure access to resources, benefits and goodwill from state institutions and

representatives. The symbolic and material support of the Senegalese state has contributed to strengthening the orders. Their prominent place in the groundnut economy, especially, and income and donations of large areas of land as 'gifts' from the state been important assets for the Mouride brotherhood to grow in strength, expand their economic activities into new areas like trade and transport, and provide for their followers. The powerful position of marabouts and brotherhoods in Senegal and the resulting material prosperity from the negotiated relations to the state is due to the symbolic authority granted them by the Senegalese population as religious followers. Their recognition, material donations and adherence to the associations and activities of the Sufi brotherhoods strengthens their position and merit among followers and with the state. However, the marabouts and brotherhoods redistribute part of these material and symbolic resources to their followers and invest them into the brotherhoods for their continued strength and renewal. As demonstrated in this chapter, and chapter 4, these relations are constantly negotiated and must involve certain benefits for all parties.

## **Practices and intersections with local and national political fields**

As religious associations are important in the everyday lives of most Senegalese, they are appealing to local and national politicians and have political implications. In chapter 4, the central role of religious authorities and institutions in national politics was explored and the intersection of religious and political fields demonstrated. This is obvious also at the local level. Religious associations serve as arenas for local network politics, as mentioned above. As arenas for religious devotion and socialisation, where change of information and discussions concerning the issues of daily lives of members and their individual and collective interests take place, religious associations are potential means of political critique and mobilisation. The social networks of relations and contacts they constitute have an additional symbolic aspect due to their religious nature. This has made them attractive for local politicians because they constitute arenas for the playing of local patron-client relations.

The importance of religious associations has not been overlooked by local politicians, who use the *dahiras* particularly to build social relationships and secure political support, often through the logic of patron-client relations and the related negotiations for an exchange of resources (see chapter 7). This normally involves the political support and symbolic

recognition granted for the patron politician being converted or exchanged into material assistance for client members. A couple of local politicians in Colobane openly express how they engage in religious associations to build a social network and a possible political clientele and at the same time to gain respect and recognition as a good Muslim and worthy local representative. Also, as in other associations, the leaders of religious associations hold potential political capital as they possess the symbolic recognition of members as their legitimate spokesperson. This has led them to be approached with attempts to recruit them into party politics. However, the various religious associations of Colobane engage in very different political practices and show dissimilar attitudes towards formal politics and the partial overlap of religious and political fields both at local and national levels.

The differences between *dahiras* may be illustrated by the example of two of the *dahiras* in the neighbourhood. In one of them, the view that politics is dangerous is expressed by the president who says he will follow the recommendations of Serigne Touba to avoid combining the spiritual (religious) and the temporal spheres. Consequently, the *dahira* has kept away from politics in general and has no relations with local politicians or the representatives of the commune. According to this *dahira* president, engagement in party politics will create conflicts in the *dahiras* and among their members at the local level. He also argues that the ‘politique politicienne’, where politicians do politics only for their own personal gain and not to advance society or promote religion, makes another good reason for the *dahira*’s abstention from politics. He is certain that his choice has been right, as the present *khalife générale* of the Mourides at the time of the fieldwork, Serigne Saliou, had stated that politics create division among people and split up families and Senegalese society.

In another *dahira* in Colobane, the attitude towards politics is quite different. Here, the leader of the *dahira* has long been actively involved in local politics and she is a municipal councillor of the *commune d’arrondissement*. She expresses that her experience and contacts in the political field is an asset and strength for the *dahira*, just as the criss-crossing of the political and religious fields at national levels has profited marabouts, religious followers and brotherhoods. She sees her general involvement in the neighbourhood, as a party politician, municipal councillor, *dahira* leader and the president of a women’s group, as making her a better representative of the neighbourhood in general and the various religious, social and political associations in particular. Due to her great social network and personal relations in various fields, she has more to offer associational members and political supporters, she

argues. For instance, through her position as a municipal councillor and her contact with the mayor, she has managed to obtain economic support to arrange a trip to the Maggal for the *dahira* and some of its members.

The political functions and implications of the various religious movements represented in the neighbourhood is a bit different from those of *dahiras* and Sufi brotherhoods, both in local politics and at the national level. They seem to have little or no relations with local politicians, but their policy and attitude towards political involvement varies strongly. The Al-Fallah movement has a non-political stance (Loimeier 2000, Piga 2002). A local leader holds that there are never official directives from the leadership of the movement to members on what party to support or what candidates to vote for at elections; members are free to choose for themselves. However, the movement has run campaigns to sensitise people for elections; to get them to register and participate. According to a local representative, the advice from the national level of the movement to members and all Senegalese Muslims has been to follow the recommendations of God and choose the political candidates they feel best in this regard. He is critical of the close relations between the political authorities and the marabouts of the Sufi brotherhoods, and sees it only as an arrangement for the political and religious establishment to keep their power, enrich themselves and consolidate their dominant positions.

In contrast to the Al-Fallah movement, the issue of politics is a central in the activities and approach of the Moustarchidine movement. According to the leader of the Moustarchidines at the University of Dakar (interview 24 February 2003 with Mahary Mbaye), it is one of several paths (educative, social, economic and political) to reach their goals. This is confirmed also by the leader of a sub-section of the Moustarchidines in Colobane; politics is relevant to them, as the movement wants social and political reforms. It is highlighted that the members are seen not only as religious followers, but also as citizens, who should be politically engaged. The movement therefore encourages people to get involved in the actualities of their country and see how the religious and social interests should be politically administered. Due to the religious, social and political orientation of the movement, a political party or candidate might be better for its goals, activities and members than others, explained a local representative. However, the necessary judgement of what is best for Senegalese society and members in political matters is not left for individuals to decide, as in the Al-Fallah movement. All political decisions are made at the national level of the Moustarchidine movement and then

passed down the hierarchy to local sections and individual members through initiatives and instructions. These institutionalised political and organisational practices are explained by the leader of a local sub-section in Colobane as a result of the competence and authority of the religious and organisational leadership of the Moustarchidine movement.

There have also been political *ndigëls*, or orders, issued by the marabouts, before the status of the political *ndigël* was questioned by some followers and the national leaders of the brotherhoods stopped this practice (see chapter 4) (Villalon 1999, 2007, Villalon and Kane 1998). According to a representative of the section of the Mourstarchidines in Colobane, all political decisions are taken at the national level of the movement, by their leader Moustapha Sy. He and the rest of the leadership will choose the best political alternative and partner for the movement, according to their ideals, goals and social programme. The religious and organisational hierarchy of the movement is obviously respected; a representative of the local unit in Colobane refuses to comment upon the political issues of the movement as a whole or in the local section. He confines himself to explaining how members must obey a political order from their leader-marabout, and refuses to comment upon actual situations that must be left to the competent leaders and marabouts of the movement. While he first holds that members are free to make their own political choices, he later claims that this becomes a problem when they have divergent conceptions from those expressed by the leadership. It is better if they are obedient and do as the marabout recommends. The local representative claims that this is not a problem, as most members are prepared to give up some freedom and comply with the collective rules and the conceptions of leaders when they join an association. The local representative holds that this makes the Moustarchidine movement constitute an important pressure group at the national level of Senegalese politics. He described how the movement informed members intensively before the elections in 2000–2002 and strongly encouraged them to register in the election lists, and so increased the number of registered voters. The movement has also provided representatives in different election sites all around Senegal. When asked about the *ndigëls* issued prior to these elections, the leader of a sub-section in Colobane explained how he must have respect for the hierarchy of the movement and therefore cannot give me any information, even if he knows that it has been discussed in the press. He instead offered to put me in contact with a representative of the movement who is authorised to answer questions on political matters in the movement.

Obviously, religious associations in Colobane engage in political practices and thus serve

political functions in local politics. They are important social networks and arenas for political mobilisation and particularly *dahiras* are courted by local politicians for the playing of patron-client roles. Due to the power and legitimacy granted the religious authorities and institutions by their followers, religious associations have political power and aggregate political implications at the national level of politics. As organisers and potential mobilisers of the population as religious followers, religious organisations constitute important pressure groups in national politics and are part of the established religious-political system in Senegal.

## Conclusion

This chapter has explored the various functions of religious associations in Colobane and how they are part of the network politics of the neighbourhood. It was argued that, in addition to their original religious functions, they serve as arenas for vital socio-economic and political practices. Religious associations gather religious followers for religious practices and instruction. In *dahiras*, the bonds to the marabouts as religious guides are of importance. The reformist religious movements relate to their hierarchy, where religious teaching and debates on contemporary religious and societal issues are emphasised. However, religious associations are also vital vehicles of socialisation and for building personal relationships and social networks. Due to the logic of solidarity and mutual help among members, which is strengthened by a religious motivation, membership of a *dahira* or religious movement may be of vital importance for local inhabitants in difficult situations. In the case of life events and ceremonies like baptisms, marriages and funerals, members may expect moral, practical and economic support from the *dahira* and its members. Also, problematic situations caused by expenses related to illness or the schooling of children are mentioned among those where assistance is provided. In the *dahiras*, the connection to the marabout may also help religious followers in their struggle to find a job, start a business or migrate to improve the situation for themselves and their family.

These religious, social and economic logics, and the horizontal and vertical contacts that make up the networks where these play out in religious associations, make investing in a membership mostly beneficial. However, while members profit from the time and energy put into the association, it may be uncertain and also involves economic expenses. There are



usually regular contributions to be paid and expenses related to the mutual help among members. The local religious field is thus a medium not only for religious practices, but also socio-economic practices. An additional illustration of how local religious associations are part of local network politics are the concrete links between the local religious and political fields, for instance when the president of a *dahira* is involved in party politics or a leader is given economic support in exchange for the political support of the members. As part of national religious movements or Sufi brotherhoods, religious associations also have national political implications at an aggregated level. They have constituted pressure groups and indirectly been a part of the Senegalese social contract. In Colobane, membership or mobilisation in religious associations might provide vital symbolic and material resources through established personal relations and social networks. These associations and the practices they yield constitute part of the network politics of the neighbourhood.



## **9. The struggle for symbolic power and generational changes in local mosques**

It is not only membership and practices in religious associations that characterise the local religious field in Colobane. Among its religious institutions and authorities are also the mosques, their imams and management. Like the religious associations, they primarily serve religious functions, while also holding additional social and livelihood roles. The mosques are arenas of local network politics, both for elites and individual inhabitants in Colobane. Local mosques are important as religious institutions that arrange prayers and religious activities besides the religious associations. In addition, it is yet another arena for the multi-activity of the inhabitants of Colobane; a place for them to seek material assistance and to build relations to and socialise with other Muslims in a religious setting. The mosques are also vital arenas for the institutionalisation and integration of local elites. The local mosques have been potent with the symbolic power of legitimate authority and the imams and the local notables that are involved in their management are important authorities of the neighbourhood. They have an almost automatic recognition and legitimacy among the population and thus hold vital symbolic power. There are variations between the local mosques, and some are affected by an on-going generational shift. This involves a physical generational change among the notables and the inclusion of youth in the management of some local mosques after they challenged the established practices and customary recognition of their elders and notables.

The aim of this chapter is to explore the struggles for symbolic power related to the mosques in Colobane. The first section of this chapter deals with the power of the imams. I argue that these enjoy great recognition as religious leaders, particularly in the mosques where they are closely related to the management and notables. Here, the mosques are particularly vital for the reciprocal assimilation of local elites. The imams often enjoy an extended authority through providing assistance to individual inhabitants with personal and family conflicts, as well as in socio-economic problems. In the second and main section of the chapter, the generational shift and a related power battle for the management of some local mosques is analysed. The disappearance of the original notables of the neighbourhood (see chapter 6) and the possible lack of automatic transfer of their habitual symbolic power to a new generation of elders for them to become notables is in question. In the situation of wider societal change, where particularly youth has incorporated the discourses on transparent and democratic

management and elements of the many religious debates, they have challenged the management of some mosques in Colobane. Groups of young men have battled for entry into the management committees, and for responsibility of the daily running of these mosques, through a silent critique of practices of mismanagement and inactivity of the established management. This was made possible through a general changed attitude towards authorities and new discourses saying that their authority must be gained from practices, personal qualifications and merit. Due to the continued respect for elders, this power battle in the mosques has been rather quiet and the process of generational change somewhat delicate. It has created generational tensions regarding, for instance, new procedures of administration, organisation and distribution of resources. In addition, there are differences regarding religious issues. The insertion and involvement of capable young men in some mosques has involved resurrection of some activities, increased focus on religious instruction and new, transparent and accountable forms of management. Such forms of management and consequent distributional practices are seen as an ideal for public administration and authorities also, and have thus led to a more critical stance towards politicians. However, there is a common and general discontent and scepticism of politicians among the imams and mosque managements. They hope for regular funding and institutionalised cooperation with local political authorities to help the neighbourhood and work for the benefit of the population.

### ***The mosques of Colobane***

Colobane has five mosques, each with an imam and his assistants, a management committee and a core of active members. The activities, arrangements and practices of the mosques vary. The two most established mosques of the neighbourhood, Khock and Sakora Badiane, were founded at the time when the neighbourhood was created. Here, the imams hold great symbolic power. They have vital social functions in addition to the religious role of leading the prayers, and are also involved in the running of the mosques and in their area of the neighbourhood. The notables are actively involved in the management and activities of these mosques, too. There are also two bigger mosques used for Friday prayers in Colobane; one in Parc a Mazout and the other at the headquarters of the Al-Fallah movement. In the mosque of Parc a Mazout, the younger generation is becoming more actively involved in its activities and management, and this is the case also in the smaller mosque of the neighbourhood, in Baye Laye. Here, the imam is involved only in the strictly religious programme of the mosque

and the management has been taken over or infiltrated by young men.

## **The habitual recognition and power of imams and notables**

Imams are important religious authorities who enjoy great recognition in Colobane. As spiritual leaders in the mosques, they have various religious tasks such as leading the prayer and performing ceremonies like baptisms, marriages and funerals. The religious activities and leadership that come with the position entails that there are certain formal requirements and qualifications that must be met for a person to be competent, according to one of the imams of the neighbourhood. Religious education and knowledge is required; an imam should be a specialist on the Koran and Islam, eloquent and with good pronunciation when he is reciting the Koran. He holds that this is necessary to perform the task of heightening people's awareness of Islam. Thus, the imams possess cultural capital through their education and knowledge of Islam. This also functions as symbolic capital, due to its religious nature, and so adds to the recognition and authority of the imams.

As religion permeates almost every aspect of daily life, it is often an element in social, economic and political arrangements at individual, local and national levels in Senegal. This suggests that the authority of imams is not always confined to religious issues, but may be extended to apply also to moral, relational, social and economic questions, as will be argued below. In Colobane, the extent of such additional roles and activities of the imams varies and seem to be dependent upon their relation to and eventual function in the management of the mosques, their belonging to the neighbourhood and their personal characteristics. In some of the mosques, the involvement of the imam in management, social and economic issues, both of the mosque and the neighbourhood, is welcomed and an established practice, while in others the view is that he should be involved only in spiritual issues. It is mainly in the two original mosques of the neighbourhood, Khock and Sakora Badiane, that the imams are involved in the management committee and have extended roles and authority.

### ***The reciprocal assimilation of elites and the popular recognition of imams***

The management committees of the mosques are responsible for their daily running, as well as the planning and execution of activities and financial issues. Traditionally, the mosques of

Colobane have been run by the local notables. According to an imam of the neighbourhood, it is both because of their position of power in the neighbourhood and their availability. They are often the most active to frequent the mosques and practice their religion. He says this is because they have an interest in and the time and energy to engage in the prayers, activities and organisation of the mosques. However, he adds that there is also a tendency for young men to become more involved. As the mosques are institutions of great symbolic capital, it is also beneficial for those participating in their activities, particularly the involved elites, for whom they serve as arenas for integration and for institutionalisation of authority and recognition.

The adherents of the mosques, of which the notables are in the majority, elect and appoint the imam. Thus, the imam is dependent upon and closely related to the notables of the area and the management of the mosque he serves; he needs their support. This is also the case for the assistant imams; these must also be approved by the management and notables of the mosques. According to a local imam, this is usually not a problem as the imams have good relations with the notables and are highly respected and counted as among the local elite.

The mentioned differences in the scope of legitimate authority and activities of the imams are evident between the mosques of Colobane. Particularly in the mosques of Khock and Sakora Badiane it seems natural to talk about the imams as local notables and active members of the management of the mosque. As mentioned in chapters 5 and 6, the notables not only include representatives of the Lebou and other families that moved to the neighbourhood when it was established, but also the imams, *délégués de quartier* and other elders active in the local mosques. There is a close relation between them and they all spend a lot of their time in the mosque, which is the primary meeting point of the notables, according to a local notable. In the words of Bayart (1993), the local mosques serve as primary institutions and arenas for the reciprocal assimilation of local elites. For instance, a *délégué de quartier* in Sakora Badiane reports that he is also the general secretary of the mosque. He explains that the local notables are very active in this mosque, both in its regular religious activities and daily running. They are part of the management and participate in the collection of a monthly contribution for regular expenses.

The importance of the traditional authorities of the notables in the management of mosques and the imams' role within it is evident in the mosque of Khock. Here, the imam is the leader

of two different associations dominated by the notables. The first is called ‘L’association d’action d’entre-aid islamique de Colobane Khock’ (The association for Islamic action and mutual help of Colobane Khock), which according to the imam was created by the local notables of the area to help the economic situation of the mosque. Among the most active are ten to fifteen of the leaders of the biggest Lebou families with a long history in the neighbourhood, some of them holding positions in the national Lebou organisation, too. In the mosques of Sakora Badiane and Khock, the local notables participate to raise funds for the mosque to support the income derived from renting out of canteens outside the mosques. This has been vital since 2000, when the municipality of Dakar stopped paying the mosques’ expenses for water and electricity. Representatives of the mosques in Colobane complain that this led to a deterioration of their financial situation. In Khock, the fundraising for the mosque is formalised through the association where members pay a monthly subscription of 1000 f.cfa. (approx. 1.5 euro). The money is used for projects to improve the mosque through modernisation and different activities, as well as regular expenditures. The members gather every month to give contributions, monitor the work done, and to discuss different religious, social and political issues.

A representative of the association explains that the involvement of the notables and the creation of this association is not only to contribute economically to the functioning of the mosque. It is also a way to nurture and uphold the solidarity, loyalty and cohesion in Colobane Khock, particularly among the notables and original families of the area. In this manner, the association and activities of the mosque in Khock is an important meeting point for the religious and traditional elite of the notables, where strong inter-family bonds are nurtured and their reciprocal assimilation takes place. The mosques form arenas of social networks where the preservation of what is seen as customary solidarity and unity is an ambition. A further example is provided with the second association established in relation to the mosque in Khock. It is a cooperative for the benefit of the notables and elders who are pensioners. Basic food products are bought directly from wholesale dealers to avoid the difference added by regular shops, and then resold to the members of the cooperative who have little income. The members may take out commodities for own consumption regularly and pay when they receive their pension each trimester. The imam of the mosque of Khock is the president of the cooperative, and has invited the imam of Sakora Badiane to join as a member.

The implication of the imam in the management of the mosque seems to be followed by a legitimate wide-ranging authority also with regard to other issues of the neighbourhood and its inhabitants. Both imams and notables explain that this is particularly strong in Khock and Sakora Badiane, the two original areas of the neighbourhood (see chapter 5 and 6). According to a local imam, the Lebou dignitaries and other family leaders have since then been active in these mosques; it is their main place of congregation and discussion. He claims that this has of course influenced the functioning of these mosques and the roles and legitimate authority of imams with the notables and inhabitants. Here, the imams serve as guides and authorities in relation to the general situation of the neighbourhood. At least two imams report that they regularly observe, discuss and talk to the population about the difficulties and interests of Colobane, both during the sermon and in other settings, and try to give advice and provide solutions. In addition, they discuss neighbourhood issues in the regular meetings among the notables. This shows the important social role and extended authority of the imams in this part of Colobane. They are descendants of the original families of the neighbourhood. The imam of the mosque in Colobane Khock is a Lebou and, as demonstrated above, actively involved in the running of the mosque, in both its religious and its social and economic activities. As a notable from one of the original families of Colobane, with great religious qualifications, an extended social network and social personality, he seems to enjoy great recognition and legitimacy as one of the most important authorities of the neighbourhood.

This imam is the fifth imam of the mosque of Khock and he explains that the first three were not Lebou, as there were not enough qualified people at the time. When competent and trained lebous were available, they are preferred as imams in this mosque. He argues that there is also an element of heredity in the succession of imams. One of his four assistants is the son of the previous imam, who has received relevant religious training and experience through studies in Egypt. It is implied that he might be a good candidate to follow as imam when the present one retires. His belonging to a prominent Lebou family and his religious competence and apprenticeship seem to make him a preferred candidate. The element of family succession is evident also in the mosque of Sakora Badiane. The imam is the son of the founder of that area and first imam of its mosque, Sakora Badiane. He first became the assistant of his father's successor, who was also the first *imam ratib* of the big mosque of Parc a Mazout, and later took over his positions in both mosques.

The imams of Khock and Sakora Badiane have important social roles and legitimate authority



in other than the religious field, following established and habitual practices in these areas; they serve as conflict solvers and guides in family, moral, social and economic issues. They are approached by inhabitants who want assistance to solve private matters such as marital and family problems, personal conflicts or economic problems. This was also mentioned in chapter 6, where the collaboration between the *délégués de quartier*, the imams and the local notables and mosques in helping out the inhabitants of Colobane was demonstrated. The imams often hold the greatest authority in these situations, and try to work out solutions with the help of the Koran and religious argumentation, as well as using family relations and the traditions of the neighbourhood. Thus, it seems that in the two original mosques of Colobane, the imam is not only a religious leader, but also someone to ask for advice and assistance in other areas of life.

The imams in Colobane, especially in the mosques of Khock and Sakora Badiane, explain that they receive a lot of pleas from people who approach them for economic assistance to put food on the table and manage other daily expenses. In interviews, both imams and notables hold that the inhabitants of the neighbourhood have more trust and confidence in, and are more comfortable contacting, the imams and notables than local politicians and the police. The socio-economic assistance function of the imams does not only involve that they have to help people who approach them, one imam reports that he also contacts and helps people on his own initiative. He reacts when someone no longer comes to the mosque or if he is informed that a person is ill. As these solidarity actions, often resulting from approaches by inhabitants, may be financially troublesome for the imams, they sometimes take the problems to the mosque. One imam says he now presents most such cases in the mosque and has explained to the notables that he does not have the budget to help all these persons through his own resources in the long run, as he is retired. Thus, at times, the resources of the mosque are used to help out people in need. It is a normal practice to appeal to the people worshipping in the mosque to make a donation for a person who is ill or otherwise needs help to cope with daily expenditures. This practice of socio-economic assistance is common in the mosques of Baye Laye and Parc a Mazout, too. Representatives of all the mosques in Colobane hold such solidarity actions of mosques to be widely known, and they all face approaches from foreigners who seek assistance in the form of money, food or a place to stay. Even if these solicitations from strangers signal a general trust in and authority of imams and mosques, they constitute a financial and practical burden. However, as an imam expressed it, he feels a responsibility to help all people who approach him; it is not only a moral and spiritual duty,

but also among the obligations that comes with the position. This makes it easier to take some of the cases on to the mosque.

In addition to the assistance provided by imams, the collections made among worshippers and the occasional use of the funds of the mosque, there are more regular solidarity and social activities in the local mosques of Colobane. According to an imam of the neighbourhood, the mosques receive money for the cash box of the mosque through contributions at prayer time, but also as *zakat*. *Zakat* is a sort of tax for charity in line with Islamic principles, requiring that all Muslims should do their accounts and give a share, traditionally set at 2.5 per cent of the annual income and capital. The rationale is that when you have kept money for a year, it shows that you do not need it and that a portion should be donated to someone who really does, states an imam of the neighbourhood. At the end of Ramadan, the mosques also receive a kind of *zakat* that is called *morrocor*, in the form of food that is destined for distribution to people in need. As the inhabitants know the imams and mosques often receive pleas from people who ask for help, and trust their ability to redistribute resources in a fair way, many choose to give their *zakat* and *morrocor* to the imam. The imam of the mosque of Colobane Khock tells of such practices of redistribution in his mosque, and holds that the religious duty of solidarity and sharing is reinforced by the tradition for redistribution among the Lebou. He claims that during the time when the Lebou were fishermen along the coast of the Cap Vert, they had certain days where the catch was distributed among the people of the village, and holds that this has created a tradition of solidarity, inclusion and assistance to fellow Lebou and strangers in need. He argues that this tradition is continued and reinforced through the established practices of the local mosque, such as the redistribution of *zakat* and general socio-economic assistance.

## **Generational shifts, legitimacy crises and power battles**

In two other mosques in Colobane, another trend can be identified. Here, the earlier mentioned generational shift can be perceived, especially in the management committees. Younger active participants in these mosques at some point took the initiative to engage in their daily running and to take over financial responsibilities. This was related to the members of the original management becoming older and fewer, as discussed in the generational shift

taking place among the original notables of Colobane in chapter 6. According to some of these young men, their engagement was aimed at restoring the reputation of the mosques after periods of inactivity and episodes of mismanagement. The mosques and their management were in a crisis of legitimacy due to their inefficient management and some incidents of corrupt practices. This rendered possible the power battle where the youth silently criticised the established management, in a context where new discourses on legitimate authority had partly disintegrated the doxic or habitual recognition and legitimacy through a focus on merits and actual practices and performance. This led active younger men to be implicated in the management of the mosques of Baye Laye and Parc a Mazout.

The mosques of Baye Laye and Parc a Mazout were constructed at a later stage than the two original mosques of the neighbourhood, Khock and Sakora Badiane. The building of the small mosque of Baye Laye was started in 1966, and three years later the construction of the big mosque of Parc a Mazout was begun, through the initiative of the association 'La collectivité musulmane de Parc a Mazout'. It is the biggest mosque of the neighbourhood, used for the Friday prayers (along with the one of Al-Fallah). It was constructed with the assistance of vital political and religious contacts, such as the Sy family of the Tidjan order in Tivaouvane, but also through generous contributions from the people of the neighbourhood. The two mosques of Baye Laye and Parc a Mazout have also been run mainly by the Lebou notables of the area, but are situated in the areas of Colobane that were populated at a later stage and now have more tenants and greater turnover of inhabitants. In these mosques, the imams mainly concentrate on the role of religious leader. Particularly in the mosque of Baye Laye the imam is not really implicated in the daily running and other aspects of the mosque, according to representatives of the management. This imam is not a Lebou, but succeeded his father who was the previous imam, and he is closely related to the notables of the mosque.

Representatives of these new managements explain how the initiative of the young to take over the management in these mosques was motivated by the managerial and financial problems that eroded the legitimacy of the management and image of the mosque among the local inhabitants. According to the new general secretary of the mosque in Baye Laye, the mosque was characterised by lethargy when they took up their office. It did not function normally and people had stopped using the mosque as much as they had before. He says that when it became clear that the elders and the notables running the mosque were unable to complete construction work that had been started on the mosque, a group of young men who

were actively involved in and frequently went to the mosque decided to take action. After discussing how to proceed, they told the notables that they wanted to take over the responsibility of running the mosque as they worried about the financial situation of the mosque as some of the elders had been borrowing from its funds. By the end of that year, a new management committee with these young men was formed to run the mosque. Their take over was possible due to the mismanagement of the earlier administration and thus their negligence of part of the legitimacy function. A similar process took place in the mosque of Parc a Mazout a few years later. The president of the new management asserts that a group of younger men who went regularly to the mosque decided to take action as they felt there had been no evolution in the activities of the mosque and they were worried about its financial problems. They wanted to take responsibility and try to invigorate the mosque as the elders were not capable of running it properly. Also here, there were economic problems and some negligence. The financial trouble was related to a treasurer who due to personal problems did not manage to administer the finances of the mosque properly; he kept some for himself. In this mosque too, the notables agreed to the assistance of the youths. As stated by a management member, they wanted to ensure the follow-up of the younger generation in the mosque and thus gave their consent for them to run the mosque with their help.

Representatives of the new management in both these mosques explain that their take-over was a delicate process, as it needed to be done in a proper way that did not offend or disrespect the notables and the elders. Their silent critique and sensitive approach was the only way to take over and obtain popular legitimacy themselves. That is why they discussed the matter thoroughly in advance, approached the management in a polite manner to propose their engagement in the management to help solve problems and reinvigorate the activities of the mosques. Eventually, they were granted permission from the elders, who still play a certain part in the running of the mosques.

### ***No longer automatic recognition, but still respect for notables and elders***

In Baye Laye the new management decided on an easy line towards the former members of the management committee. They did not investigate or ask who had borrowed from the funds of the mosque and how much, even if they were convinced this applied to almost all the members. They left it up to the notables themselves: it was pronounced that each person should be their own judge and return what had misappropriated. Thus, even if the takeover of

the management by the youth decreased the control of the notables, they disposed of their problems without direct personal consequences. It seems as if this strategy was chosen to avoid problems and not to cross the line in relation to the traditional respect and authority of elders and the local notables. The crisis of legitimacy of the established management and the concealed power battle resulting in shared power shows the importance of adjusting to elite and popular logics for the attainment of symbolic power and legitimacy.

However, the fact that it was possible for the young men to take action and thereby indirectly criticise the management of the mosques and thus implicitly challenge the legitimate authority of the notables, indicates that there are certain changes in the neighbourhood, as discussed also in chapter 6. The notables have traditionally possessed a great legitimacy and respect as the representatives and authorities of the neighbourhood since its establishment. They were mainly Lebou notables, some holding positions within the national Lebou institution, good relations with the colonial administration, and serving as spokesmen for the neighbourhood and intermediaries between the population and the respective authorities. In the original areas of the neighbourhood, I am told that they were the ones who helped solve the problems of Colobane, negotiated the use of land and influenced the building of mosques. They are referred to, both by older and younger inhabitants of the neighbourhood, as recognised leaders of the neighbourhood who manifested themselves and stood out as good organisers and representatives. It is said that this is the reason they became notables and were granted spokespersons for the families in the area. However, as mentioned in chapter 6, this generation is dying out; there are only a handful of these individuals left.

I have the impression that the elders of a new generation who are now taking over as the original notables gradually disappear do not enjoy the same habitual recognition as those mentioned above. A father from one of the original Lebou families of the neighbourhood claims that some people, and particularly the youth, now speak of the situation as ‘there are no real notables left’ and express the view that the notables of today are ‘just a bunch of old guys discussing’. Thus, it is not only about a democratic change, but also involves that there is now time and system regarding the view of authorities. There have been changes; automatic legitimacy is to a greater degree questioned and there are more often demands for results. The authorities must work for and deserve the recognition and thus symbolic power they are granted. In this situation, it seems as if the definition of a notable is changing when faced with the demographic generational shift. The notables are still the imams, *délégués de quartier* and

heads of native families in the neighbourhood. But as this generation disappears, other elders of the neighbourhood, like those connected with and involved in the local mosques, religiously devoted elderly men with knowledge and experience that merits respect and authority, will be in line for the position of notable. At the same time, the almost automatic recognition of the elders seems to diminish, as is illustrated by the change of management in some of the local mosques. This seems related to a new discourse focusing more directly on personal qualifications and practices of various authorities for them to be perceived as legitimate.

This is what made it possible for the active youth of the local mosques to offer their help with the management of the mosques when there were obvious problems. This is one example of how the earlier automatic legitimacy of notables is to a certain degree silently challenged with the generational shift. It is now even more important to earn one's title and recognition through personal engagement and valued practices and characteristics. Thus, this change in discourse makes a discreet critique of elders permitted if reasonable. Somehow, one gets the impression that the attitude toward the informal elites of the notables is changing, at the same time as the traditional respect and legitimacy is stable for those who earn it as qualified individuals. Hence, the example of the extra-religious activities and roles of the imams in the mosques of Khock and Sakora Badiane, where they by different means promote the benefit of the mosque, its adherents and the inhabitants of the neighbourhood, show how their practices expand their power and legitimate authority. On the other hand, the malpractice of the management in some of the other mosques is not silently accepted, as particularly young people seem no longer to recognise or respect the elders blindly only because of age and religious devotion. By taking over the management, they indirectly challenged the notables and elders, but they took great care not to openly express their critique, so as not to humiliate the elders and to respect their continued position.

### ***New management and generational dynamics***

The new management in the mosques of Baye Laye and Parc a Mazout involved certain changes in administrative routines and practices. The power politics, silent critique and sensible handling of the former management made the take-over generally accepted by the notables and prior management, but it also led to related conflicts and power struggles. There seems to be generational tension regarding several issues, particularly the managerial changes

introduced by the young men in a situation where they are still dependent upon the elders.

In the mosque of Baye Laye, the new management started to hold monthly meetings to evaluate the financial situation and the work done on the mosque, as well as to decide on new projects or strategies for payment of the eventual debt. At these meetings, it is only the new management that is present. Once a year there is a general assembly where the elders/notables participate, and they together make the priorities and set the objectives for the coming year. According to the new general secretary, this gives the notables and elders an opportunity to express their opinions, wishes and advice. However, he also admits that there are some problems to this new form of organising. The power shuffle has created conflicts and the elders at times see themselves as excluded from the daily running of the mosque. They express that it is not normal to have meetings without their attendance. To counteract these generational tensions, a representative of the new management is particularly responsible for the relations with the elders and regularly talks to them about the mosque's situation and eventual problems. The new management wants to obtain a flow of information between the young and the elders, as they want to maintain good relations with the elders and they need their authority and social recognition to solve particular issues. For instance, the new management of the mosque in Baye Laye has been dependent upon the elders and notables in relation to the religious leadership of the mosque. They had some problems with the imam not attending the mosque on a regular basis, and at times not turning up to lead the prayer as planned. This was particularly difficult as several of the four assistant imams did not function as intended either. The new management committee could not intervene in this situation, they needed the elders to talk to the imam and sort out this sensitive problem.

The election of the president of the management association in Parc a Mazout might be a symbol of the generational dynamics and attempt to ease the relations and tensions between them. He was elected during the general assembly by both the youth and the elders, and afterwards he was accepted by all of the notables related to the mosque. He is 52 years old, actively engaged in the mosque and well educated with a lot of work experience. He has a reputation of being a 'good Muslim', using the mosque for the five prayers as well as on Fridays. It is part of a strategy for co-habitation and compromises between the youth and elders of the mosque. As his mother was part of the team making it possible to construct the mosque, through her state employment and network of relations that helped provide the plot of land and facilitate the construction process, there is another historic link to the mosque.

There are still, however, some tensions among the youth and the elders. Even if the elders were happy to get rid of the problems at first and welcomed the initiative of the younger men to take over the management, they now are a bit reluctant and feel rejected. The president of the management association has decided to involve the elders a bit more and at the next general assembly will transfer his position to an engaged elder. He thinks that the new management should still be composed mostly by young people, but there needs to be some elders in important posts to decrease the generation gap and related conflicts. They have already appointed a 90-year-old Lebou notable and founder of the association of the mosque as their honorary president. He is a notable with stature who moved to the neighbourhood in 1963, and who claims that it was he who built the mosque with the help of God and of Abdoul Aziz Sy (then the *khalife générale* of the Tidianes). He has had quite an influence on the mosque by helping to collect funding, starting the construction of the mosque and finding a good imam.

In both Baye Laye and Parc a Mazout, representatives of the new management hold that it was vital that they took control, as the problems indicated above blocked the functioning of the mosque. The financial troubles and debt created a situation of crisis, both for the mosque and the elders. The crisis was obvious at the financial level, but also on the level of legitimacy. In both mosques the functioning fell apart and there was a lack of activities and engagement. They therefore suffered from a deteriorating reputation among the local inhabitants, who became reluctant to support or participate in the mosques. The new management hoped that they could improve the financial and religious activities of the mosques to enhance people's view of the mosques and their level of involvement and support.

The generational shift in the management of these mosques became evident particularly with regard to the daily running and administration of the mosques, but also had consequences for religious, socio-economic (distributional) and political practices and attitudes in at least one of them, as will be discussed below. One of the strategies of the new management committee in Baye Laye to rehabilitate the popular image of the mosque, and to restore its legitimacy, was a new approach to its daily running. They reorganised, started activities and initiated a new management approach to attract the interest of people, make them contribute financially and become active members of the mosque. They started off by informing the households in the area of the new management team and asking for a contribution. To ensure continued support and improve their impression of the mosque, they decided to use a new strategy based on



transparency and accountability. Each month they would invest the money raised into something useful, so by the end of the next month, people could observe what the donations were used for. Representatives of the new management claim the result to be a better economy and new activities in the mosque. Also in Parc a Mazout, the new management wanted to improve the functioning and standing of the mosque. There were plans for reforms, but at the time of the fieldwork these had not yet been realised due to continued financial problems. A management representative states that although the treasurer was dismissed a year after their take-over, he still collects and keeps most of the rent from the four canteens they hire out. He has refused to give up his responsibilities and the management have decided not to report him to the police, but try to solve the difficulties in other ways. Still, it has led to problems with performing the desired changes in the mosque or starting new activities. In turn, this has discouraged the initiators. The new management have not kept their schedule of meetings and again suffer from little activity as the financial problems continue. In the mosque of Baye Laye, the new management carried out most of their plans; they finished the remaining construction work and initiated new work to modernise the mosque, and built three canteens to secure a steady income. But despite these positive changes and an improved image of the mosques among local inhabitants, the representatives of this new management hold that it has been hard to uphold this work over time. In practice, the management committee is mainly driven by a handful of persons only; there has been a certain turnover of members and the management suffers from only a few of the members participating in meetings and being actively engaged as earlier. This increases the work of those continuing their work, but they still manage to make changes in the activities and practices of the mosque.

It seems as if the generational shift and the arrival of younger forces in the management of the mosques have resulted in a new politics of distribution that has created some generational tensions. For instance, the distribution of funding to private ceremonies in the mosque of Baye Laye has been limited, something that diverges from the practices of the former management committee. The new general secretary claims the elder notables ask for money for different ceremonies, where they donate according to past established practices. He thinks this kind of distribution at private ceremonies creates problems as everyone cannot be treated equally, and it breaks with their focus on consequence and transparency in the employment of the funds of the mosque. They are aiming for a more democratic and accountable regime. However, there is still a distribution of resources within the mosque. The practice of asking

for contributions among participants at prayers, when someone has approached the mosque for assistance, continues. In addition, the new management erected various structures to provide aid without a random distribution of money. They installed a social committee in the mosque to help people in relation to funerals and illness. They may help with the expenditures and make visits to support the family or person. Such financial and moral assistance is not done openly, so as not to embarrass the receivers and also to avoid people taking advantage of the system. In addition to this formal system of solidarity activities, there is an informal group related to the mosque in Baye Laye. According to the general secretary, they are about fifteen young males who contribute 500 f.cfa. (approx. 0.8 euro) monthly, and the money is used to discreetly help people in the neighbourhood. As they know Colobane very well, they easily identify those who need assistance. One of the members of the group hands over the money and does not reveal who provided the money or how they know of the need of that particular person or family. Thus, despite the goal of formal and transparent procedures related to the mosque, there are still concealed practices of assistance too.

### ***Generational differences with regard to religious issues***

The generational shift in the management of the mosques and the engagement of the youth do not only have implications for management and distributional practices. It also involves generational differences on religious issues. Thus, it may affect the religious line and activities of the mosques, as the young have a greater focus on religious instruction and are affected by the general debates on Islam in Senegalese society.

In the mosque of Baye Laye, the new management wanted to invigorate the activities of the mosque, and planned to start various educational activities. A management representative said they were in a situation where the imam and some of his assistants did not do their utmost in their jobs, but a young assistant imam wanted to contribute. This assistant imam is well educated and qualified, and they planned to use his competence to arrange different courses in the mosque, also for women. However, the elders of the mosque refused his engagement and managed to stop the plans when they protested along with the imam and his other assistants. According to a management member, they saw their positions threatened and they did not like the assistant's contact with the Al-Fallah mosque, where he had done courses and teaching. His affiliation to this movement promoting reformist Islam alienated the elders, who seemed to be extremely sceptical about the Al-Fallah movement and their mosque in Colobane. This

rejection of the Al-Fallah was also evident among the older representatives of the mosque in Parc a Mazout.

The imams of the mosques in Khock and Sakora Badiane are not as one-sided in their criticism of the Al-Fallah. They signal that the movement and mosque in Colobane are not part of any local social organisation or religious tradition; their imams are not traditional or local authorities. There is however some contact, the imams and other notables from these mosques go to the Al-Fallah mosque to pray from time to time, and the representatives of the Al-Fallah sometimes come to their local mosques. One of the two imams expresses a certain approval of their religious arguments, such as the focus on the Koran and the Sunna to see what is right and wrong. However, at the same time he is extremely critical of their rejection and critique of the Sufi orders in Senegal.

The mosque of Parc a Mazout is a Tidjani mosque, like most other mosques in Dakar, claim some of the notables and imams in Colobane. As mentioned above, close contact with the Sy branch of the Tidjanes helped the construction of the mosque, and representatives of the mosque signal close personal relations between the mosque's honorary president and Abdoul Aziz Sy, the former *khalife générale* of the Tidjanes, and his support for the mosque. Consequently, the mosque takes a Tidjani line and does the Tidjani prayers of *khadratoul diouma*. However, the new president of the management says that he himself is not a member of a Sufi order, and he thinks there is a general moving away from them among the youth. He is afraid that the order-affiliation of mosques might create division among members, as he sees that some of the members of their mosque avoid the Tidjani prayers and only participate in the regular sermon. He feels the mosque should be open to everyone and that all Muslims should feel welcome. Another youth from Colobane argues that it is due to fear of the Mouride order, and that they will take over, that causes the conservatism of local mosques. As the building of mosques and religious education traditionally was dominated by Tidjanis, they do not want to lose this to strong Mouride hands.

Interviews suggest that these events illustrate generational difference regarding the attitude towards Islam in the neighbourhood; the elders of the mosques are more true to the Sufi orders and traditional ways of arranging things, while the youth are more preoccupied with religious teaching and lean towards a more individualist religious orientation where personal faith and religious duties are seen as more important, despite belonging to a Sufi order.

Discussions with and among representatives of the new managements and other youth in the neighbourhood seem to reveal an attitude among them that might reduce the importance of marabouts. Although not rejecting Sufi-Islam, quite a few of these young men claim that they are simply Muslims and that their religious practice is between themselves and God only. They tell of a trend and a new interest in religion with weight put on individual religious devotion, practice and learning. Some of them hold that this is a natural development in line with societal changes such as improved education, increased access to information and new religious movements and groups that tell of alternative religious practices. More people are able to read and understand the Koran themselves and it has become more accessible through the distribution of copies of the Koran by governments and movements of the Middle East and the Arabs' support for the educational activities of religious movements. This religious change involves an increasing focus on religious teaching.

Of course, this is not to say that most young people reject the marabouts and institutions of the Sufi orders. As demonstrated in chapter 8, young people are among the most active both in local *dahiras* and local sections of various religious movements. As one youth expressed it, there need not be an incompatibility between adherence to a religious association and the individual practice of religion. It also seems that this interest and perceived individual responsibility for religious practice and instruction may be related to the capacities of those promoting it. This is supported by Callaway and Creevey (1994), claiming educated Senegalese women and men to be more likely to give up affiliation to a Sufi order due to their more intellectual definition of religion. In Colobane, it was mostly educated young men who expressed such attitudes, and among them were those who had the initiative and capability to engage in local mosques and offer to take over the management. For instance, a management representative explains that he wanted to use his competence to do something for the neighbourhood and combine it with his religious interest. Also the well-educated general secretary of one of the mosques in Colobane says he preferred to engage in the social and religious fields of the neighbourhood, as it suited his interests and he is negative towards party politics. In addition to his engagement in the mosque, he is active in the local section of the youth and sports organisation, ASC. Through their studies, experience of other organisations and employment, the young men of the new management committees bring new competence and religious attitudes into the mosques of Colobane.

Some of the religiously engaged youth do however have a critical stance towards the Sufi

orders. One claims that the marabouts do not fulfil their role as religious guides very well, and that this constitutes a problem of legitimacy. He thinks the brotherhoods and marabouts do not contribute much to their followers, but mainly exploit them to enrich themselves. He says this has made young followers particularly practise their religion independently, through local mosques or in the alternative religious movements. There are new demands and a different awareness towards the religious guides and institutions that make their habitual authority questioned if practices are not approved by the followers (see also chapter 4). However, these trends seem only to be partial, the eventual critique of established practices and popular Sufi-Islam is not openly expressed; there is still great respect for the marabouts and their Sufi orders. This is clearly expressed by the elders and notables in these mosques, such as in Parc a Mazout, which has a strong bond to the Tidjani order. Again, the imams of Khock and Sakora Badiane seem to have a more balanced position towards marabouts and brotherhoods. One of them agrees that it is not correct of the Senegalese to see their marabouts as God or believe that they can guarantee or decide a believer's place in paradise or hell; that is only the work of God. He highlights the work of marabouts as one of religious instruction; they should teach the Koran and the five pillars of Islam. The other imam agrees that the marabouts should concentrate on religious teaching, and also regrets that the economic aspect has become too strong. He argues that some marabouts are too occupied with the financial support they obtain and that people adhere to them only to enrich themselves. The argument that the competition between marabouts and brotherhoods, and their too close relations to the political authorities, may create both discord among the Senegalese and division within families is not directly declined either. On the other hand, he rejects all general critique of the brotherhoods and claims they must be respected as they perform vital religious activities; their creators followed the recommendations of the religion to assemble the Muslims and guide them to follow God through the Prophet.

These differences between generations in the management in some of the mosques in Colobane have affected the religious line of some mosques. As mentioned above, the new management of the mosque of Baye Laye has a greater focus on religious training and, according to a representative, they hope to arrange courses on the Arabic language and various religious issues. This view was expressed also in the mosque of Parc a Mazout, where the view that any mosque should include an educational centre as well as a social centre was expressed. In addition, the new management in Baye Laye distinguishes between spiritual and organisational competence. The implication is that the imam takes care of the prayer and the

spiritual aspects of the mosque, but is not particularly involved in the management of the mosque. They of course inform him of their decisions and plans, and listen to his advice. But their attitude is that the imam should not be too implicated in these issues, it is not his role to discuss and quarrel, he should have a religious focus. If not, it may create problems or lead to the loss of recognition, according to a representative of the new management. This resonates with the societal changes at the national level discussed in chapter 4, where there seemed to be a tendency of differentiating between political and religious authority and fields to a larger degree.

### ***The hopes and disappointments of political relations***

Along with the change in management practices came generational differences not only in religious issues, but also with regard to the respect for political and state authorities. As mentioned above, the new management of the mosque of Baye Laye opted for transparent and consequent distributional practices. They also hold this to be an ideal for political authorities and administration, and thus critique the distributional practices of local politicians. For instance, the general secretary of a management committee describes how the mayor of the neighbouring *commune d'arrondissement* of Medina used to donate money in their mosque before the *Alternance*; he distributed it among the faithful, like to old friends, instead of giving it to the mosque. He thinks it is a bad practice, as the resources did not go to those who needed them the most.

Another representative of the new management holds that such unsystematic and unclear politics of distribution are continued through the practices of the new local authorities and mayor. As an example, he tells how some small oxen were distributed to some of the mosques of the commune during a religious celebration. By coincidence he was in a mosque in Fass, a neighbourhood nearby, where the imam thanked the mayor who had offered two oxen. He was annoyed, thinking that the mosques of Colobane also have a right to oxen distributed by the mayor of their common *commune d'arrondissement*. He later talked to a deputy mayor from Colobane to explain the situation, and shortly after, the imam of the mosque in Baye Laye received a phone call and was told to collect an ox at the *mairie*. Again, he was upset; the mosque in Fass was given two animals and he also thinks it was wrong that the ox was not brought to them, like in Fass. When he expressed these thoughts to the elders of the mosque, they became agitated and claimed that he did not want them to get the ox. He is discouraged

that they did not understand, that was not his point, he just wanted the donation to happen in a straightforward, transparent and consistent manner.

In Parc a Mazout there is a critical stance taken towards politicians, both by the younger generation and the elders of the mosque. For instance, the notable who is the honorary president of the management clearly expresses the view that he does not like politics when he exclaimed: 'Politicians are subordinates who try to take God's place'. A younger representative of the management in the mosque explains that they are all aware that politicians try to influence the imam and the notables of the mosque to gain their support and supposedly thus indirectly or directly influence the people using the mosque. He knows that the politicians approach the imam and ask him or try to pressure him to support them, and describes how their imam is categorical in his refusal. He portrays these practices of politicians as natural, as their mentality is to work in all ways necessary to obtain the support they need. That is why they support the mosques, to build confidence and support, and why they try to influence the imams who are powerful and legitimate authorities and so possible vote carriers (*porteurs de voix*).

As they do not obtain any regular public funding for the mosques, but only on occasions, like before elections, have been given money or other resources from political authorities, several of the imams in the neighbourhood hold that it is not a support related to the needs of the mosques and their congregation. They have the feeling that it is only material support offered by politicians who seek political support and votes in return. One of them provides the example of how the new mayor of the commune, Mr Ba, asked the imams to come to the *mairie*, without sending a written convocation or informing them on what issue they were summoned. When he went there with the *imam ratib*, they were each given 200 kilogrammes of rice and 10 kilogrammes of sugar by a secretary of the commune with the message that it was to be shared between the imam and his assistants. He took the donation to the mosque to ensure transparency and just distribution to those who need it, but this caused all the notables to see it and think that it was for distribution among them. They thus came to get their share, and shortly after he was left with only seven kilogrammes of rice and a packet of sugar. He thinks the administrators of the commune should be more professional in their actions and practices.

It seems as if the general dissatisfaction with politicians is shared at least by some imams and

management representatives of local mosques. One imam says he refuses to enter into political arrangements, as from experience he knows, and strongly dislikes, that politicians and state representatives try to use him for political means and personal interest. He also signals that an imam should not be involved in, but abstain himself from, politics. This frustration with party politics and political authorities seems to have continued also after the *Alternance*. The imams and others actively involved in the mosques explain that they hoped for a real interest in the people and problems of the neighbourhood and a request for their co-operation in the work for the neighbourhood. But, again, they experience that local politicians are not interested and lack respect for the imams and notables as important neighbourhood authorities. As an illustration of the improper behaviour of politicians, an imam mentions how the current mayor of Dakar, Pape Diop, convened the imams of the neighbourhood before the elections. He arranged for a meeting to be held in the home of the *imam ratib* to learn their opinions on the possibilities and problems of Colobane. They were all present at the arranged time and place, but he never showed up and did not bother to call or send anyone to explain the situation; this showed disrespect.

One imam says he is happy with one action from the new municipal council. The imams of the commune were summoned to discuss the needs of their neighbourhood before the budget was decided. They brought up all the issues mentioned by the inhabitants and discussed among the notables, but have not still seen any action from the commune or the municipality of Dakar. However, even if they appreciate the manner in which they were called upon to give their advice and opinion, they also feel that the politicians asked for their advice merely to pacify them and obtain benevolence and supporters among the traditional authorities in the neighbourhoods. They are also dissatisfied with the lack of financial assistance from the commune, especially when they know that the funds for the destitute in the budget of the commune are not distributed to those who need it. One imam alleged that these funds are distributed among a political clientele and thus used to buy and maintain political support. He wishes for a real collaboration and fruitful discussions with the commune and the municipality of Dakar on the issues and problems of Colobane, so they could work for the benefit of the inhabitants in unison.



## Conclusion

The mosques in Colobane are vital institutions for the network politics of the neighbourhood. They form arenas for the reciprocal assimilation of local elites, and the struggle for symbolic power. This is due to the central position of Islam in Senegalese society, and the force of the religious. The imams in Colobane all enjoy great respect as religious authorities and a habitual recognition among the inhabitants. Their cultural capital derived from religious education and knowledge provides symbolic power. In some mosques, they enjoy extended authority due to their personal characteristics and practices, and the established arrangements in those areas. Here, the imams possess great social capital through their close relations to the inhabitants of the area and its local notables, as well as an expanded power of authority. They are vital guides not only in religious and moral questions, but also with regard to personal, social and economic issues. Thus, the mosques, their imams and management are important also in the strategies of the inhabitants of Colobane; they are included in their multi-activity to promote their interest and manage daily lives.

However, the symbolic power of local authorities is not absolute. As demonstrated in chapter 4, there is a trend that authorities may experience their doxic or habitual recognition being challenged in periods of crises if they do not live up to expectations and their legitimacy is threatened. In the management of some mosques in Colobane, there has been a generational change and silent power battle. Young men took over the daily running of the mosques from the elders and notables. This occurred in a situation where the original management members became elder and fewer, as the generation of the original notables of the neighbourhood slowly disappears. In the context of the great social and political change in Senegal, the new discourse on how merit and performance should determine legitimate authority and power seems to have had an influence also at the local level. Through a silent critique of the administrative and economic malpractices of the established management, pointing out their crisis of legitimacy, the younger generation negotiated positions and influence through a quiet power politics and strategies that recognised the continued respect for elders and notables. This take-over and power battle has led to generational tensions and disputes on administrative, distributional and religious practices in these mosques. The young men seem to a greater degree to have been informed by the new discourses on democratic and accountable management and the religious debates, focusing for instance on religious

instruction. There is a still a delicate situation of continued tensions, in a situation where the youth and elders are mutually dependent to secure their continued symbolic power and that of their local mosque.

## 10. ‘Mbolo moy dole’ (Together we are strong): Women’s associations and savings groups in Colobane

*Aita is busy, one of her best friends, Khady, has given birth to a son and the planning of the ngente (the naming ceremony or baptism held on the seventh day of the baby’s life) is proceeding. The ceremony involves large expenses and great preparations, but the membership in a women’s association will help the new mother. Aita and the other members of the association will help Khady by giving money, food or fabrics and some will also assist her with the practicalities of planning the event as well as the preparation and serving of snacks, food and drinks to the many guests at the celebration.*

In Senegal, women are very active in associational life (Rosander 1997a). They are engaged and numerous in the various religious associations (see chapter 8), as well as a variety of other community groups. The social and economic organisation of women is particularly evident in women’s associations and their related savings groups. These have a long history; a *mbotaye*, a women’s association for Wolof women, is described in a written source from 1853, but had clearly existed much earlier (Hargreaves 1965). Women’s associations and savings groups exist all over Senegal and may assemble women with reference to workplace, education or geographic location. For example, they may gather women who have migrated from a particular region of Senegal and now live in the same city, or women living in the same village or urban quarter (Rosander 1997e). They also exist among the women of the Senegalese diaspora (Kane 2001). There are numerous women’s associations and savings groups in Colobane, and the members are mainly women living in the neighbourhood, or those related to it through their social network of friends and family.

The aim of this chapter is to analyse the logics and functions of women’s associations and savings groups in the neighbourhood of Colobane in Dakar. I will argue that these serve essential social and economic purposes, both for members and their leaders, as they constitute vital social networks and arenas of sociability, saving and mutual help. The associations have rotational savings and credit activities that enable members to handle pressing expenses or to start income generating activities through this informal financial function. In addition, there is a social security role nurtured through the socialising and leisure activities at meetings, where members may discuss and ask for help to solve personal problems. Logics of solidarity and

self-help among members provide needed assistance in difficult situations and regarding ceremonies. While members pursue individual interests and benefits through their membership, the unity of the women and their social and economic investment into the collectivity is emphasised. It is the logic of mutuality; if all members respect their obligations, they will secure personal assistance and profit at a later stage. However, the functioning of women's associations and their savings groups are also highly dependent upon their leaders. The women initiating such associations seem to be resourceful entrepreneurs, already holding potent social networks and recognition. As members may withdraw if dissatisfied, the leaders work to uphold their position and the power of legitimate representation delegated by the women. This symbolic power and recognition involves a political potential that has contributed to making these leaders desirable to political parties, which have worked to recruit them into their ranks.

### ***Women's associations and savings groups in Colobane***

The women's associations and their related savings groups have different names like *mbotaye*, *tour*, *tontine* or *nath*, which are used inconsistently by the women in Colobane. To simplify, one could say that the *mbotaye* and *tour* were originally associations for women with the primary goal of union, solidarity and mutual help; the *mbotaye* assembling older and married women and the *tour* having mainly younger girls as members. Today, both terms are used for associations which gather members of different ages. The name *tour* indicates the rotational basis of meetings and the logic of mutual help; that the members each take their turn. This term is also used by members and leaders to describe the savings groups related to the women's associations, again reflecting the fact that each member takes her turn to collect her share of the contributions or savings which are distributed on a rotational basis among members. These savings groups are also called *nath* (in Wolof) and *tontine* (in French). Not all savings groups in Senegal are related to women's associations, but they are often dominated by women. Those discussed in this chapter are exclusively for women, or are totally controlled by women who manage the practicalities of a possible, solely financial participation from a male relative. As the names and functions seem to overlap in the accounts of members and leaders of such associations and groups in Colobane, I chose mainly to use the terms 'women's associations' and 'savings groups' to avoid fuzzy concepts.

The number and age of members, and the frequency of meetings, vary between the women's

associations and savings groups in Colobane; they have between 20 and 200 members and gather weekly, fortnightly or once a month. The largest associations often assemble women of different ages, while the smaller ones link women of more restricted age groups, for instance younger women and girls or older married women. The locations of the meetings also differ; some gather in the courtyard or house of the associations' leader, who is called president or mother (Rosander 1997e). Others hold meetings on a rotational basis among members, either by making a draw among them or by asking the woman who last 'won' the draw of the savings group to host the following meeting. The rotational nature of women's associations, savings groups and their activities will be discussed below. Like other associations in the neighbourhood, the women's associations and their savings groups also vary with regard to their durability; some last only for a short time while others have an extensive history. A few also close down for shorter or longer periods. The leader of one of the biggest women's associations in Colobane holds that it has existed for more than 30 years, and while original members have quit and new ones have joined, the association has slowly grown to include about 200 members.

The women's associations and savings groups in the neighbourhood often start on a small scale by assembling women related primarily through family, friendship and neighbourliness, and later grow and include women from all over the neighbourhood, according to several presidents. The importance of social networks for membership is confirmed by members who are often informed and recruited through friends, relatives and neighbours. For instance, a young woman from Colobane is a member not only of a women's association and its savings group in the neighbourhood, but also one in another area of Dakar, where she was invited to join by friends living there and two of her sisters. Thus, it is often a mixture of geographical location and personal contacts that is the basis for membership in women's associations and savings groups.

For the women who are members in the women's associations and savings groups in Colobane, they constitute important social networks and arenas for mutual help, socialising, saving and credit. Such collective mobilisation is among the manifold ways of doing politics, and entails political acts promoting the interests of the women. As part of their strategies and multi-activity, this associational engagement involves a struggle for material resources and symbolic recognition that is principal in the network politics of Colobane.

## **Savings and credit functions: an informal finance institution**

The women's associations and savings groups in Colobane have different kinds of benefits for their members who invest their time, energy and money. The most obvious is the economic profit related to their saving and credit activities, which make them function as informal financial institutions. As mentioned above, most of the women's associations in the neighbourhood have one or several savings groups related to them, and there are also other arrangements for credit and economic accumulation. Both leaders and members explain that they engage in these economic activities because they provide them with economic security and profit, and a possibility to save money while keeping it safe from day-to-day living expenses and requests from family or friends who need assistance. Yet, the presidents of two of the biggest and oldest women's associations in Colobane stress that the savings functions and groups are only secondary activities and that participation is voluntary, even if most of the members take part in them. There is also a clear difference regarding the admission to a women's association and a savings group respectively. The president of one of the biggest women's associations in the neighbourhood explains that while a woman who wants to join their activities is immediately permitted to participate in the association, she must wait to enter the savings groups until a share is available or the present round is finished. However, membership is not open to everyone, the rules and obligations of these associations and groups imply that a woman must have the time and opportunity to attend meetings, that her familial and other responsibilities makes it possible, and not least that she has the financial resources necessary.

Savings groups are not particular to Senegal, but can be found all over Africa and also in other continents (Bouman 1994, Lourenco-Lindell 2002, Rosander 1997e). In the literature they are known as ROSCAs, rotating savings and credit associations (Bouman 1995, Guérin 2006). In such savings groups, the economic investment of members is formalised and institutionalised through a rotational system based on the logic of mutuality and members taking their turn. The members contribute a fixed amount of money at each meeting before a draw is made among them, like in a lottery, to decide who will 'win' the money contributed that day. All members have to pay this regular contribution until the tour or round is over and all members have won. This constitutes a system of forced saving and credit, where most

members, not counting the last one winning, access a particular amount before they had been able to save the money individually at the same pace, due to the rotational and collective logic. This means that for those winning early in the tour or round, there is a credit function and for those winning late, it is more like a forced saving. A concrete example of organisation and practice may be provided by a savings group in Colobane, where 30 women meet twice a month to contribute 1000 f.cfa (approx. 1.5 euro). This gives a total of 30,000 f.cfa. (approx. 46 euro) at each meeting. When starting the tour, all the members' names are written on notes, and at each meeting a draw is made; the person whose name is on the note is the winner. She is then excluded from the draw until the tour is over, but still has to pay her contribution until all 30 members have 'won' and thus saved the 30,000 f.cfa.

Most savings groups in Colobane involve only the contribution of money and the goal of accumulating economic capital. However, some groups save for particular events or products, and in others, a product is given in addition to a financial contribution. For instance, in a savings group of 50 girls and young women meeting once a week, members contribute 100 f.cfa. and an additional product, like soap, rice, a cosmetic product, a piece of fabric or a bowl. There are also smaller savings groups focused on particular products. In one, 20 women meet three times a month to save for beautiful sheets. According to the president, she has led many such groups saving for products like jewellery, fabrics or various household items. The members differ from time to time, depending on their interest in the product. Among the groups saving for a specific event, there are those focused on ceremonies, and a few where the women save to go on the pilgrimage to Mecca. The members of these groups are mainly older married women in a relatively favourable economic situation, who are able to make substantial contributions (between 2500 and 8000 f.cfa. a month, approx. 4–12 euros) over time and to engage in other fundraising activities arranged by the group.

Although savings groups have certain variations in their practical arrangements and goal of saving, their main logics, rotational nature and activities are the same. The frequency of the meetings varies from once a week to once every two months, and the contributions differ between 100 and 8000 f.cfa. (0.2–12 euro). Most of them have both regular and fixed contributions, but at least one savings group has more flexible arrangements. According to the leader, the reason for the flexible contributions is a wish to be accommodating towards the women, and for them to participate according to their possibilities. In this way, less privileged women have the opportunity to take part in the savings groups. The fixed and relatively high

contributions of rotational savings groups have often been criticised, as they may exclude the poorest and increase inequality among women. The president of the group practising greater flexibility says that it makes the logistics a bit more demanding, but does not constitute a problem; she just thoroughly registers all contributions and makes sure that the return is equal to the amount contributed for each member.

In some savings groups, members can hold several shares or *loxo* (hand in Wolof). This implies that they must contribute in proportion to them – i.e., holding two *loxo* means paying double contributions – but it also gives the member the opportunity to win the draw twice during a tour or round. A number of savings groups in Colobane allow two *loxo* per member, while one permits as many as five (but with lower contributions). However, in most savings groups each member holds only one share, and a leader explains that the practice of holding several *loxo* was stopped in their savings group when the number of members increased steadily.

For the savings and credit functions to work properly, the collective obligation and mutuality in the practices of contribution must be respected by members. In addition, transparency is important, according to several presidents, as it makes the system predictable and easier to trust. Also Rosander (1997e) highlights transparency and honesty as central notions in female activities, for the group to legitimise the activities of the association and thus the individual benefits for individuals. This is why the draws are made in public and in a regular way each time, just like the systematic registration of contributions and wins; it makes it possible for the members to verify the process. However, in some savings groups, the draw is not always done in a straightforward manner. The president of a savings group for young women explains that it is possible for members to ask her to win the draw at a particular time. If a woman faces expenses related to housing, serious illness or the ceremony of a life event, the president may arrange for the woman to ‘win’ the draw by either writing her name on all the notes or reading her name out no matter what name is written on the drawn note. She explains it is not difficult, as a lot of the members are illiterate and are not able to verify it properly. On the other hand, she says, there is little point in ‘cheating’ as all members know of the practice and most of them accept it. Many have their goals well into the future and do not want to win the draw before they need their money. For them, the savings group is a crucial savings mechanism that keeps the money safe until they want to use or invest it, and it is thus an advantage if other members ‘win’ at earlier stages. Nevertheless, I have the impression that



this practice of letting a particular member win the draw is no longer common in most savings groups in Colobane. A leader says she stopped the practice when the number of members in her group increased and most of them faced difficult situations at times; it was getting hard to administer in a fair way and was rejected by most members.

Most savings groups are quite strict about the presence of members at meetings. They are expected to come to all meetings, unless they live outside Dakar. This is a necessity for them to be included in the draw and thus have a possibility to win, according to both leaders and members of various savings groups in Colobane. Some groups are more flexible in relation to the attendance of members who live in the neighbourhood, due to their familial duties. Here, members are allowed to send their children or others to pay their contribution and explain the reason for their non-attendance, without being excluded from the draw. However, the president of such a group stresses that the women should attend if they are able, and that there are economic sanctions if the members are absent, arrive late or do not pay their contributions without giving notice.

Membership in a savings group gives women the possibility of a regular and 'forced' saving, either for particular events and products, or of money. The economic capital accumulated is used for various purposes by the women, according to leaders and members in Colobane. Some are forced by their financial situation to use the saved money for daily expenditures related to food, housing, water, medical bills, electricity or schooling for children. Others save to upgrade their house, visit relatives in other parts of the country or to travel abroad, and many invest the money in important ceremonies. It seems as if most women hope to reinvest their savings to further accumulate economic capital. The president of a savings group for young women tells how members use the money saved to start small businesses and income generating activities like trade, sewing, hairdressing, cooking and sale of food. For example, one woman bought plastic chairs that she hired out, and another started to trade with fabrics and cosmetics. The investment in such activities has in some cases created permanent jobs and income, or the economic capital needed in particular situations and periods of the women's lives. The wish for economic profit is confirmed by members of women's associations and savings groups in Colobane, which also provide other possibilities for saving, credit and income generation than the ones mentioned above.

For instance, for the women able to invest their saved money in a small business, the

women's associations and savings groups, their members and meetings, constitute important customers and 'markets'. The accounts of both members and leaders reveal that the women who invest in fabric, clothes and shoes, or in food ingredients to produce juices, snacks and ice cream, try to sell these products during the meetings, especially those that are a bit festive and last the whole evening. For example, a young woman uses her saved money to buy clothes and handbags in Banjul (Gambia) which she sells to fellow members with a small profit.

In addition, there are women's associations and savings groups in Colobane that hold additional economic functions like a mutual credit system or an economic interest group (*groupement d'intérêt économique*, GIE). These credit arrangements have a logic that is similar to the one of savings groups; rotational and mutual, involving regular contributions from members. In one such group of mutual credit in Colobane, the members make fixed and regular contributions to augment and secure the holdings of the group, and to raise the amount which is given as a credit to members. According to the leader, members may borrow the money as individuals or as a group, and it is often used to secure income through the start up of small businesses like catering and petty trade as the women aim to make a small profit before they repay the loan. The leaders of such credit groups claim that the money is always paid back, but that they have a fine for delayed payments to avoid any default. In another group, the women have organised the mutual and rotational credit system in a different manner. Here, they have created a GIE and invested in chairs and various items of household equipment that they rent out. The income is later provided as a loan to members of the group. According to the president, when there is a surplus of between 50,000 and 100,000 f.cfa. (75–150 euro) in the cash box, credit is distributed through a draw. Thus, the rotational nature and logic of mutuality is the same as in the savings and credit associations mentioned above, only the money is raised in a slightly different manner.

The members, and the leaders, of women's associations and their savings groups in Colobane receive benefits from their membership. As discussed above, there are vital systems of saving and credit related to these associations that make them function as informal financial institutions for women (Guérin 2006). Although the members generally hope to attain further economic profit through investing in various income generating activities, many women have to use the money for pressing everyday expenses or invest it in the important ceremonies related to various life events. In such situations, the mutual help and solidarity among

members is also of vital importance.

## **The social security of socialising and solidarity: coping with everyday expenses and the organising of ceremonies**

Solidarity and mutual help are expressed as the main goals and functions of the women's associations in Colobane, both by leaders and members. They stress how the union and alliance of women is vital to achieve these and to empower the women, as indicated by the title of this chapter: 'Mbolo moy dole' (Together we are strong). This Wolof expression is the slogan of a women's association in Colobane and the logic it represents is emphasised by members and other presidents who describe how the association of women provides them with power. For instance, a young woman claims that she feels her strength and possibilities to be dependent upon her membership in a women's association, as it provides her with a certain security through the socialising and mutual support that marks the networks of women.

The community of the women has a social profit, as the associations provide a frame for social gatherings and entertainment through meetings and the exciting draws of the savings groups. They constitute arenas and opportunities for socialising and leisure time for the women, as well as for vital exchange of information among them. Varying between associations, and partly depending on the number of members attending, refreshments and snacks may be served, and occasionally music and dancing is arranged to create a bit of liveliness and an agreeable frame of sociability. A president of a women's association claims that this is vital also to build, uphold and signal the unity of members. The practice of some savings groups of saving a small portion of the contributions from each meeting to arrange a party and to buy some reasonably priced fabric from which the members sew similar clothes when the tour, or round, is over, has the same motivation, according to a local leader. It is entertainment and reward for the members, and a symbol of the membership, unity and solidarity of the group.

The regular meetings constitute important meeting points for the members of the associations, and an opportunity to discuss, talk and have fun, even if no special arrangements are made. A

member says that the meetings of her savings group are important occasions for her to meet friends, enjoy herself and talk to the other women. Actually, the aim of a few of the savings groups in Colobane seems to be as much social as economic. The leader of one named 'the reunion tour' says they were a group of friends who started the group to be able to meet on a regular basis. As many of them had moved out of the neighbourhood, the meetings of the savings group and the obligation of being present to contribute presented a pretext for them to meet regularly. A member holds that this is the case also in other savings groups, even if it is more evident in this reunion tour where every meeting is arranged as a festive social gathering, with food, drinks and enough time to socialise, reminiscence and catch up on each other's lives. Indeed, members and presidents of various women's associations and savings groups in Colobane explain how meetings are vital for members not only to engage in everyday small-talk, but also to exchange information, discuss and ask for help regarding economic problems or the organising of ceremonies. This is supported by Rosander (1997a, 1997e), highlighting the importance of being member of a group, a collective, to realise oneself and obtain respectability as an individual, as well as to access an arena of socialising and of mutual-help for ceremonies and other social events.

The members of women's associations and savings groups may turn to their fellow members for help with various problems and events in their everyday lives (Kane 2001). As an illustration, the president of a women's association in Colobane reports that the cash box is used to help members with urgent financial problems, such as paying the medical expenses for a sick child or raising money for necessary school equipment when a child is about to start school. In addition, the women may draw upon their close relations with other members and the institutionalised practices of the association to secure assistance in pressing situations where they need to cover their basic needs or arrange ceremonies related to various life events. Thus, the membership in women's association and savings group may provide a certain social security function, due to the logic of solidarity and mutual help guiding the network of women and their practices.

The solidarity and mutual help with the issues and stresses of everyday life is particularly evident in the support given when ceremonies are arranged in relation to various life events, like the mentioned *ngente* (naming ceremony/baptism), weddings and funerals (Rosander 1997e). Membership in a women's or savings association seems vital for women in Colobane preparing or having responsibilities in relation to these significant ceremonies. Preparations

are discussed and planned not only with family, but also friends and relations in the women's associations, according to both leaders and members. The fellow members also provide moral, practical and economic assistance. With regard to *ngentes*, a president says that the members contribute by giving food, fabrics, practical assistance and money. A young woman told me that a few days earlier she had participated in the *ngente* of her friend's daughter. They are members of the same saving group, and she and other members hence helped prepare and serve the food for the guests. In addition, they provided money and other gifts, customarily presented in a long ceremony, where the amount of money or the item and the name of the contributor are literally shouted out and registered. Such ceremonies are important in the social life of the Senegalese, and symbolise status and prestige, and thus the symbolic power of the involved women and families. This applies also in the case of funerals, where the logic of mutual help and solidarity of the women's associations also come into play. According to a president, she is always informed of deaths in the families of members, and then reminds members to assist the woman who has lost a family member and provide a contribution to help with the arrangement of the funeral and following reception of relatives, friends, neighbours and others. Occasionally, if it is outside the neighbourhood, she leads a delegation to the family to show their support and deliver the contributions from members.

Although solidarity and mutual help is a fundamental principle, different rules and logics seem to regulate practices of assistance among members with regard to different life events. According to several presidents of women's associations in Colobane, the women should help their fellow member with practicalities and contribute a money gift, or *ndawtal* (in Wolof) for the celebration of *ngentes* and weddings. The receiver of the *ndawtal* is later required to return the amount (or the double in some situations) when the giver arranges a similar ceremony. This reciprocity is part of the reason why gifts are thoroughly announced and registered at such events. Through conversations and interviews with women in Colobane, I have the impression that this logic of gift exchange is not restricted to the practices of the members in women's associations, but regulates the gift exchange also among other inhabitants of the neighbourhood. This is also the case in relation to assistance provided in the case of death and related to funerals, where everyone who knows the stricken family are expected to help with practical arrangements, provide moral support and make financial contributions according to their possibilities. However, this economic support called *diakhhal* (in Wolof) has a different logic to it; it is not required or expected to be returned in the same way as the *ndawtal* (money gift for *ngentes* and weddings). The assistance provided by

members in such situations are essential to those who are suffering from grief and the loss of a family member and struggling with the arrangement of the funeral. They need the moral, practical and financial support from their fellow members who participate to show their respect and sympathy, donate money or food, and help prepare the house and meals. Thus, membership in a women's association or savings group provides essential aid and support in such situations.

This solidarity system related to the ceremonies of different life events exists in all women's associations, but with variations. The practical assistance and economic donations may be regulated by the leader, or not; there might be fixed contributions or not; and the *ndawtal* is obligatory, or not. In some associations the financial support is institutionalised through specific savings groups particularly for ceremonies, as mentioned above. It all comes down to the decisions of the group and its leader. In most associations, meetings are used to inform members of ceremonies and the registration of contributions is made, which is particularly important regarding the money gift of *ndawtal*, as a return is expected. This is confirmed by the president of an association who says that she carefully registers the givers, amounts and receivers of contributions.

Thus, membership in a women's or savings association provides the benefits of an important finance institution, a system of social security and a frame for social and leisure activities. The associations provide the possibility for economic profit through savings and credit functions that make it possible to accumulate capital and engage in income generating activities. Their meetings provide arenas for socialisation and the creating of a social network where problems are discussed and ceremonies planned. Through the norms of mutual help and solidarity, the women are provided with moral, practical and economic assistance from fellow members in difficult situations or related to various ceremonies. They are thus vital arenas for the practices of local network politics. However, there are certain logics that must be respected by all members for the investment in such associations to be profitable.

## **Unity is strength: the logic of reciprocity and individual benefit**

The solidarity and mutual help of women is described by both leaders and members of

women's and savings associations in Colobane as extremely important. It is represented as the basis, goal and main functions of these associations. This is reflected in their slogans, like the one quoted in the heading of this chapter, or in their names, as in the case of the association Dégo Colobane. *Dégo* in Wolof means to be in agreement or to agree on something, and according to the president, her goal is to create mutual help and unity among all women in Colobane; younger single girls and older married women. Members of various women's associations in the neighbourhood indicate that they seek to be involved in a social network of women that assist each other. They hold that united, women possess strength that they cannot find as individuals.

Despite this focus on internal solidarity and communal values, it has been evident from the discussion above that membership serves individual interests; there are great potential social and economic benefits. However, there is no profit without investment. Membership in women's associations and their savings groups involves certain obligations. The women must invest their energy, time and money into the association and co-members. Through establishing and nurturing social relationships at meetings and the various activities of the association, mutual recognition and obligation is created. This network of horizontal and vertical relations makes members develop friendships and contacts that constitute vital social capital. These social relationships provide material benefits when they are confirmed through the exchanges of gifts and assistance. This aspect is institutionalised and regulated through the association, and particularly obvious in the activities of the rotating savings and credit associations. Through the underlying logic of mutual solidarity and help, social capital is converted into economic capital. For the system to work and members to be secured assistance in the case of unexpected expenses or the arrangement of a ceremony, it is vital that they all respect their obligations to the group (Rosander 1997e). If all members comply, the women participating in local women's associations and their savings groups can secure great social and economic returns.

Such individual returns and interests are seldom actively expressed in a way that directly challenges the logic of solidarity and reciprocity. There are conflictual negotiations within associations and groups with regard to their rules and individual accommodations, but this seems to be more on a detailed level. It may be that these discursive practices contribute more efficiently to the cohesion of the group, and thus provide both collective and individual benefits. Particularly with regard to the functions of social security assistance, it may be

profitable to highlight the primacy of the collective. Individual interest must be concealed for the system to work properly. However, most often, this is not a conscious decision, members and leaders of the women's associations and savings groups are informed by their habitus, composing both a social system and individual dispositions for action (Bourdieu 1990b, 1990c, 1998), focusing on the unity and association of women and the solidarity and mutual help among them. This recognition of the primacy of the collective requires that it is not often openly challenged and there is little talk of sanctions against those disrespecting the system.

The discussion of individual gain and the expressed use of sanctions seems to be more open and legitimate with regard to savings groups and credit arrangements, due to their obvious goal. Even if most such groups seem to function without many problems, there are certain risks attached to the economic investment of members. For instance, some savings groups last only for a short time, and others are closed down for brief or longer periods. According to members, this is often the case for the savings groups where the members are girls and young women, who do not have a stable income. A leader explains that when the members get married, gain new responsibilities and sometimes move out of the neighbourhood, it becomes hard to secure the presence and obligations of members. Savings groups are based on the social logic of reciprocity, but here there are often more obvious sanctions for members who fail to comply with the rules of the group. That is why the savings groups in Colobane have various sanctions towards members, like if they are late with contributions or entirely fail to pay them after winning a draw when the tour is not yet finished.

There are different combinations of social, economic and legal sanctions. A few savings groups have formalised their rules to be able to use legal sanctions. According to leaders, they experienced fewer irregularities after they started to register their savings groups with the police on the basis of a document where all members sign and oblige themselves to follow the rules. This makes it possible to use a lawyer or take the issue to the police if someone stops paying their contributions after winning or a member pays her share irregularly. Savings groups that are not as formalised often use economic sanctions to prevent problems. For instance, in one group, members are fined 1000 f.cfa. (approx. 1.5 euro) if they are not present and they do not send anyone with their contributions and to explain the reason for their absence. Members who are late for meetings have to pay an additional 200 f.cfa and wait until the next meeting to make the double contributions and have a possibility to win. There are also social sanctions and consequences. Members face the possibility of being excluded



momentarily, or may find that they are not welcome as members when their savings group starts a new round. In addition, a member explains that the women know well that their reputation and status among fellow members and in the neighbourhood might be diminished if they fail to fulfil their obligations. Another young woman explains that there are few problems in her savings group because of the affiliation and mutual obligations between members. However, she adds in a humorous tone that the women also know that the women of the group will show up at your house and talk disapprovingly of you if you fail to pay your share of the contributions.

Thus, despite individual interest in social and economic profit from engagement in women's associations and their savings groups, the recognition and importance of mutuality is signalled. This is because the logic of reciprocity must be followed for the system to work and provide both members and leaders with social and economic benefits. In addition, it might empower them by increasing their economic independence. Those who use their savings or income to ease the situation of their household may experience their position and power within it to be enhanced, according to a few presidents. According to Abdoul (2005), the success and survival of women and their families depend upon solidarity networks and the generation of cash to be invested into social and economic activities, deriving from tontines and family ceremonies. It is however not only the female members who gain profits from their investment and activities in women's associations and savings groups. Also the leaders, who take on great responsibilities and investments, might expect various personal benefits from their efforts. The next section discusses the great social, economic and symbolic capital of these presidents, and how their recognition and position of power as legitimate representatives and leaders of women make them hold great political potential.

## **Associational leaders as social entrepreneurs and organisers**

For women's associations and their savings groups to function as intended and emerge as local and voluntary organisations for mutual assistance with social and economic profits for members, their leaders are essential. There is a need for female social entrepreneurs who inspire confidence among the local women and can manage a continued and good functioning of these associations. Often, it is the woman initiating the association who becomes its leader,

even if the president is elected and her position agreed upon by the members. Several presidents in Colobane hold that this makes them dependent upon the support of members, as they are only the executors and co-ordinators of the decisions of the women. They explain that when an association or group is started, the initiator informs women of her plans, the time of the start-up and the eventual estimated level of contribution. Then a meeting is arranged for the women who are interested, where the initiator and prospective members jointly decide on the number of members and rules of the association, and then elect its president.

Being the president of a women's association or a savings group involves responsibilities and hard work. The presidents are required to hold archives of the registrations of contributions and winnings of savings groups, as well as the gifts and assistance made between members of the women's associations. They are responsible for the management of the associations and have many tasks to perform. However, there are usually assistants who help with concrete chores, such as collecting contributions and making the draw. Sometimes, they also delegate the tasks of registering the contributions, winnings and gifts of members, but this is still supervised by the president herself. There is also a particular member who assists with the spread of information. She is designated and compensated to notify members of meetings, ceremonies in the families of members or special arrangements of the association. Often, she is a *geuwel* (*griotte* in French); from a family or 'caste' of information-spreaders, praise singers and musicians. As most of the women's associations and savings groups in Colobane primarily gather women living in the neighbourhood, the spread of information is quite easy. Still, associations hold records of the phone numbers of members (or the number of a neighbour, if they do not have a phone) so they may inform those living outside the neighbourhood, or the members in Colobane when urgent issues arise.

Despite practical help, the president has the main responsibility for the activities and management of the women's associations and the related savings groups. She must make them function according to the original intentions and have each member to fulfil her obligations. Thus, for the leaders of savings groups, it is vital to be observant and responsible to avoid problems, in addition to launching sanctions towards members who fail to comply with the rules. According to a local president, when initiating a new tour or round in her savings group, it is vital to restrict the women who have been bad or late payers from re-entering the group. She also claims that a leader must be particularly observant during the first meetings of a round to detect potential bad payers and take precautions by excluding those

who do not pay their contributions on time. As the leader of the group, the president is responsible for completing potential lacking payments. In addition, to keep the members and their recognition, she must work to secure them their benefits through a well-functioning association.

This makes it imperative for a president to be flexible and competent to find solutions to problems occurring during a tour, or round, of a savings group. For example, if a member has severe economic difficulties and withdraws, the president must handle it. A local leader says she tries to solve the situation in a fair way if the member has paid her contributions, but not yet won the draw. Usually, she manages for the woman to get most or all of her contributions reimbursed, for instance by inviting a new member to take over her *loxo* or share. This new entrant will buy out the person and continue the tour in her place. Luckily, it is seldom hard to find someone to take over the place of a woman who must or wants to leave the savings group. Participation in women's associations and their related savings groups is popular, and presidents report regular approaches by women who aspire to become members.

### ***The characteristics of the presidents of associations***

It is imperative to recognise that it is not an arbitrary matter who becomes a president. In women's associations, as in other fields, the person chosen as a leader and representative frequently already holds a strong position in the community and thus has a large social network. It is my impression that the presidents of women's associations and savings groups are generally charismatic and competent individuals with qualities and experiences which make them seem appropriate as leaders. For instance, they are frequently from families that can provide them with resources, such as socio-symbolic capital, which increases the possibility and probability for them to initiate an association and to acquire an image and recognition as a trustworthy and good leader.

The presidents of women's associations in Colobane hold various capacities and resources to be necessary for serving as a leader. They claim a president must possess an entrepreneurial spirit and have many social relations which make it possible to plan an association and to inform, gather and motivate women to join. In addition, they hold a certain amount of economic resources to be essential if one is to engage others to pay their contributions, participate oneself and hold the main responsibility for the functioning of the group, like in

the case of compensating for delayed or missing payments in savings groups. Most of the presidents I interviewed seemed to come from relatively good economic circumstances, either through their family or due to their own economic activities. One stressed that she, as a wealthy independent businesswoman, not only had access to economic capital but also could advise the women in economic questions. She claimed this to be valuable for her position as a leader, along with her work experience, both as an owner of an eating place in the market and as an independent trader. Another president emphasised how the skills and knowledge attained from working in a big company and representing the women employees in its local trade union has made her a good leader of women's associations. Leadership and engagement in associational life and organisations outside the neighbourhood is used also by other presidents to demonstrate their capacities and initiative.

In addition to such experiences, several of the leaders of women's associations in Colobane stress personal characteristics as vital to initiate an association and motivate women as members. They all emphasise that a president must be able to lead, talk to, mobilise and assemble people. One of them claims that her ability to organise people has contributed to making her not only the president of a women's association, several savings groups and a *dahira* in Colobane, but also led to her being recruited into party politics. Also, a wide social network of personal contacts is claimed to be critical for a potential or actual president. She must have a wide range of personal relations, contacts, acquaintances, family and friends in the neighbourhood for her to contact and mobilise members, and attain legitimate authority. Here, the social capital of her extended family seems important not only for mobilisation, but also obtaining the recognition necessary for a leader.

The inhabitants who are members of the original Lebou families that first moved to Colobane, or who have lived in the neighbourhood for a long time, traditionally hold a particular recognition and position, as was discussed also in earlier chapters. This provides vital symbolic power. Most of the presidents of the women's associations in Colobane are from such families, some even belong to the more influential ones with positions of power in the neighbourhood or the Lebou community, thus possessing vital social and political contacts and networks. As an example, the parents of one president were closely related to Senghor (the first Senegalese president) and had many contacts through their central positions in his *Partie Socialiste* (PS). The fathers of two other leaders served as *délégués de quartier* (see chapter 6), delegates of the inhabitants in Colobane and their intermediaries in relation to

formal authorities. One explains how people came to see her father with personal problems and to discuss communal issues, and describes the family house as a place of assembly for the inhabitants of that corner of the neighbourhood. Another president in the neighbourhood regards her position of power as related to her belonging to the Diop family which traditionally holds the position of *Serigne Ndakaru* (the grand Serigne of Dakar), the 'president' of the Lebou.

The importance of family origin seems to be significant with regard to the leaders of women's associations in Colobane. This might be because it grants a certain symbolic capital or recognition, and because coming from a family with ample resources has provided the women with valuable education and experience, in addition to an extended social network. These constitute valuable assets for obtaining the capacities and capital perceived as necessary for the president of a women's association. However, the power and recognition of a president in a women's association is dependent upon the support of the members and of them delegating the power of the group as their representative (Bourdieu 1986). The position as a legitimate and recognised representative and leader of women provides great symbolic capital for presidents to engage and mobilise the women. It also makes them interesting and valuable to political parties, as the act and power of representation and mobilisation is also a central stake in the political field.

## **Delegation of power and resulting politics in women's associations**

Even if it is often the initiator of the women's association who becomes its president, it is the support of the women which is vital for her obtaining and keeping the position as leader. As presidents are portrayed as co-ordinators of the agreed wishes and decisions of members, it is evident that the delegation of responsibilities and power to them as representatives and spokespersons of the women is vital to their position and significance as leaders. This process of delegating representation (Bourdieu 1986) provides a position of power and legitimate authority to the president, and a possibility for members to hold her responsible and accountable. This dependence upon the members and their perception of them makes it vital for the presidents to work to uphold and 'earn' their leading positions and the related large symbolic and political power delegated by the women.

The presidents of the women's associations and savings groups of Colobane have various strategies and ways of doing this; some pay a lot of attention to transparency and giving members the possibility to choose a new leader, while others engage in party politics and/or have great plans for developing the functions of the association to the benefit of the members. This may be exemplified by the account of a president who claims she has floated the possibility of resigning as a leader to provide the women with the possibility of appointing a new one. She also makes sure all draws and registrations of contributions, gifts and wins are done in public to give the members the chance to verify the process. Several presidents also hold that they have engaged politically mainly because they wanted to work for the benefit of the women and hoped to contribute materially to the association and the welfare of members through their position in a political party (this will be discussed further below). The presidents of women's associations and savings groups in Colobane also report a wide range of plans and hopes of future activities for their associations and members. One leader wants to assist young mothers with schooling through starting a social centre where they can have access to books and classes. Her dream is to help fight the poverty that touches most women and children in Colobane. The wishes and hopes of helping the women of the associations are apparent in the discourse and action of several presidents. For instance has one used her personal means to buy sewing machines that she will rent out to secure an income to the association and use to start a training programme for the young women in her association so that they can learn to sew and thereby generate a certain income.

The presidents of the women's associations thus work to earn and uphold the position and recognition they are granted as leaders and representatives by the women. The delegated power from the members and their perceptions of the president's engagement for the women and the neighbourhood enhances her social position; she gains recognition and thus symbolic power (Bourdieu 1986). It is mainly this superior status of legitimate authority that may explain why presidents initiate associations and take on the responsibility and work related to being a leader. Of course, a leader may collect the same social and economic benefits as the members, but both the investment and profits are greater. She participates in the same savings and credit functions, but may also take advantage of her administration of these activities. For instance, the presidents who organise groups of women saving for particular products make sure they calculate a certain economic gain for arranging the group. One of them says she spends about 16,000 f.cfa. (approx. 24 euro) on producing the luxurious sheets that are the

goal of their saving, but that each member will have contributed 20,000 when winning the product. However, most important seems to be the great social capital generated through the leadership of women and the related symbolic power of legitimate representation. Respected and recognised by the women, the leaders or presidents obtain a certain status and authority required by political parties.

The presidents as recognised and legitimate leaders of women's associations and savings groups hold symbolic power, and thus also significant political potential. Due to their personal capital and the collective or institutional capital accessed through their position, they are powerful individuals whose support would be valuable for political parties and their mobilisation of members and votes. In addition, the meetings and activities of these associations constitute critical arenas for the gathering and mobilisation of people, and therefore may serve political purposes. The political parties and their representatives have therefore been active in trying to recruit presidents of the women's associations and savings groups in Colobane into their ranks. These presidents hold great social capital and possess not only the needed personal qualities and practical possibilities for mobilisation, but also the symbolic capital that is critical in the political field, and is somewhat lacking in local politicians and state representatives, as seen in chapter 7. The political parties thus want to benefit from their considerable influence as recognised representatives of the women to secure needed legitimacy, support and votes, and thus convert it into the political power and capital at stake in the local political field.

Hence, most of the presidents of the larger women's associations in the neighbourhood have been approached by representatives of different political parties, and many have been recruited into politics. They recognize that they were recruited due to their positions as associational leaders and their abilities to mobilise women. One president claims that it is natural that the political parties wanted to use her social network, power and recognition as a respected leader for their benefit. Several presidents say they joined the PS after repeated requests and refusing the first offers because they felt it could lead to problems. It was only when they became persuaded that they could work for the women of their associations and the neighbourhood in general that they started the political engagement. For instance, a president of a women's association and its savings group in Colobane claims she has assisted both individual inhabitants and the members of her women's association through being the local contact person of the PDS in the neighbourhood. She declares her involvement in local

women's associations and *dahiras* to promote her position in the party, contribute to making her a municipal councillor and granting her a certain recognition in the local community. Altogether, engagement in various social fields has provided her with a wide network of social contacts and makes the members of her women's association see her as an engaged, motivated and active leader working for their benefit, and that of the neighbourhood. She claims this has provided continued support from the women, who stand behind her and make her a leading figure in the association, neighbourhood and political party.

The clientelist practice mentioned above, where material resources are provided in exchange for political support, is thoroughly described and analysed in chapter 7, both in relation to the logic and practices of the political field in general and the co-existing horizontal and vertical relations of associations in particular. Although some presidents have managed to provide a certain economic or material support for their associations, several also express disappointment with regard to the promised opportunity to promote the interests of the women of their association and claim that they have decreased their political involvement recent years. There seems to be a general dissatisfaction with what they see as distribution of clientelistic spoils to the members of their associations. One president says that although she knows it is appreciated by the members, she is a bit frustrated about the smaller benefits distributed by the PS in latter years, like the trivial amounts of rice, sugar and money she is presented to distribute among them. In addition, as party resources for distribution to clients and supporters generally have been drastically reduced, at least one president declares she has had to use private financial means to meet the demands of the members as party activists; they have become used to this economic support from the leaders as a supplement to the assistance provided by fellow members.

Thus, the political involvement of the presidents of the women's associations and savings groups is not only beneficial to the members or their leaders, it may also cause problems. The presidents who were recruited into and became engaged in politics now face demands for material assistance from members who have adapted to the routinised clientelist distribution of resources practised by political parties. In a situation where the political parties no longer have the same amount of resources available to mobilise supporters, the presidents of the women's associations find that they are forced to spend personal economic capital. In addition, the political involvement may endanger the recognition of the presidents, as party politics and politicians suffer from a lack of legitimacy among the population.



Even if the political engagement and position of a president generates important contacts and material benefits for her association and its members, it may also harm the respect for and appreciation of her among the members, if she becomes too associated with the perceived malpractice of local politicians who suffer from a crisis of legitimacy. Also some of the presidents agree with the expressed disappointment of many inhabitants; they say there are many unkept promises and unhealthy clientelist practices in politics, and that they can understand why politics is seen as a dirty game where politicians only work for personal benefit, power and position. They have themselves been promised possibilities to solve some of the problems of the neighbourhood and means to help the women in their associations in exchange for their support to a political party, which have later not been kept. One president holds that the members of the women's associations have understood this game of the politicians, and claims that in time it will force her and others to withdraw from their political activities and positions. They are dependent upon the recognition of the members to uphold their positions and power as legitimate representatives.

## **Conclusion**

Women's associations in Colobane provide social and economic benefits to their members and leaders. They constitute important informal financial institutions through their savings and credit activities that provide members with the possibility of coping with daily expenditures and investing in income generating activities or ceremonies. In addition, the members form a social network providing a certain social security through the internal logics of mutual help and solidarity which provide obligations for members to assist each other with regard to the arrangement of such ceremonies, coping with unanticipated expenses and securing basic needs. Among the social benefits are the social gatherings and community of members at the meetings and various activities of the associations, which constitute legitimate arenas for socialising, festivities and entertainment. It is here that social relationships are built and nurtured through the exchange of gifts and assistance, informed by a common sense and rules of reciprocity. This is what makes the women's associations and savings groups successful, in addition to the management and great effort of leaders. The presidents of these associations in Colobane seem to be resourceful and creative entrepreneurs. Through

practising their leadership in a way that satisfies members, they not only obtain the same benefits as members, but are also delegated great symbolic power as respected authorities and legitimate representatives of the women. This constitutes vital capital needed in the local political field, leading the presidents of women's associations to be invited into political parties. The aspirations of these women, in addition to individual motivation, seems to have been to secure material resources for the members of their associations and to work for the benefit of Colobane inhabitants. Some however start to feel that their political engagement may lead to problems and could jeopardise their leadership of local women's associations and their savings groups. The presidents who are local politicians worry that the promised benefits to members and associations are not kept and that they may have become too affiliated with the perceived malpractice of and related critique and crisis of legitimacy of party politics.

## 11. The struggles of neighbourhood associations

Besides the religious associations and the women's groups analysed in chapters 8 and 10, there are a variety of other associations in Colobane. Some of these are more formally organised, although mostly run by informal practices. They are labelled sports, youth and/or development associations by their leaders, but I choose to use the term neighbourhood associations to refer to them collectively.

The aim of this chapter is to analyse the associational life of Colobane through its neighbourhood associations. First, some of the associations are presented with examples of their organisation and activities. Most of them organise various social, informational and educational activities. Some also perform social work, through their assistance of children and youth in the neighbourhood. While the internal generation of resources from members' contributions and local support suffices to organise these activities, most neighbourhood associations struggle to access external funding to be able to realise their goal of improving the situation of the inhabitants of Colobane. However, it is not only a lack of resources, but also a problem of mobilisation that characterises the neighbourhood associations. This demands hard work from associational leaders, who gain profits from their investment of time and energy, particularly if they manage to secure funding needed for planned projects. Financial support is closely related to links with local politicians and political parties that distribute party and state resources according to the logic of clientelist exchange. They provide local associations with material resources in exchange for symbolic recognition and political support. However, a new discourse on community organising, rejecting politics and favouring collaboration with NGOs, clashes with established practices. Leaders and members, particularly the younger generation, want to secure the autonomy of their association from party politics. However, the simultaneous demands of distance from politics and acquiring external funding constitute a dilemma. These produce a paradoxical logic of practices for the members and leaders of neighbourhood associations, which is complicated by a tendency of fragmentation in local associational life. The struggle for funding, political alliances and a history of neighbourhood rivalry together contribute to an intense competition and hostility between neighbourhood associations in Colobane. This complicates collaboration and joint action that might lead them to reach their aim of contributing to the development of the neighbourhood and improvement of the inhabitants' situation.

## Neighbourhood associations in Colobane

The oldest of the more formal associations of the neighbourhood (thus not counting the *dahiras* and the women's associations) is the local *Association Sportive et Culturelle* (ASC), ASC Colobane. It runs a football team on a regular basis, but the majority of its activities take place during the summer holidays, when the football tournaments (*navetanes*) and other social and educational activities are arranged. According to a management representative, their main goal is for the football team to win football tournaments in Dakar, and at higher levels. The active members of the association are boys mainly around the age of 18, but there are also older supporting members. Another sports association in the neighbourhood is the football school, *École de football Jean Mendez*, where members are between seven and 15 years old and come from both within and outside Colobane. The core activity is football, but a leader explains that they are also preoccupied with giving the boys a proper social education. This includes helping them to a formal education in school or an apprenticeship for a profession, as well as promoting the values of solidarity and union.

Colobane has several youth and developmental associations as well. Among them is the *Amicale des jeunes de Colobane* (AJC), which has members aged between 15 and 25, with a majority of girls (a general trend in associational life (Rosander 1997a), mentioned also with regard to religious associations in chapter 8). This, with other associations in the neighbourhood, has the goal of connecting and mobilising the inhabitants of Colobane to work for common interests and the development of the neighbourhood. The local section of the *Association Sénégalaise pour la Paix, la lutte contre l'Alcool et la Toxicomanie* (ASPAT) has members between nine and 40 years old, the majority being young girls and boys. At the time of the fieldwork, they had an office in Colobane that was shared with the national management of the association. ASPAT works to prevent the use and abuse of alcohol and drugs, often through informational activities. Many of the neighbourhood associations centre their activities around instruction and the spread of information in their work to improve the situation of the inhabitants and contribute to the development of Colobane.

### *The arrangement of regular activities*

The neighbourhood associations in Colobane have different types of activities. Some engage in social work. For instance, the football school not only trains boys in football, but also

organises and assists young people in problematic situations. According to a leader, it was started to help the youth of Colobane. Two friends observed how the illegal activities and problems related to the market in the neighbourhood created a bad reputation and represented a temptation for young boys drifting around during the summer holidays, or permanently due to having dropped out from school. Thus, the activities of the football school were concentrated to the summer holidays and their regular work came to involve helping the members of the football school to stay in or to be readmitted into school. Alternatively, vocational training, such as in workshops for tailors and carpenters, was arranged. The social work has also profited non-members; they have assisted boys seen hanging around the neighbourhood and sometimes helped parents who had recently migrated to town to register their children at a local school. In the process of improving the situation for the boys, the leaders of the football school try to cooperate with their parents. For those without a family, the leaders work to arrange a place in a Koran school and provide them with money and clothing contributed by the members of the football school.

The work of local associations also involves awareness raising. A leader in the football school explains that the logic of solidarity is something that they aim to teach members and integrate in their activities. For example, the members who have parents in a relatively good financial situation make extra contributions to the healthcare cashbox which is used to cover medical expenses for all members if they become injured or ill, as not all members are able to pay the set annual subvention. The logic of solidarity is also concretised through the practice of helping the boys from destitute families to purchase school materials through the subventions of more affluent members. At times, the solidarity also encompasses non-members, such as the mentioned assistance to orphans. In addition, they sometimes help children who are sick with the money needed to consult a doctor or to buy prescribed medicine. In this manner the football school performs vital social, educational and solidarity functions in addition to training members in football.

The neighbourhood associations in Colobane also arrange informational activities. For instance, the ASC arranged a day where they worked to enrol young girls into school and recruit youth for their summer classes. During the holidays they engage teachers from the neighbourhood to hold courses in return for a small payment. The students pay to participate, and as only one-third of the amount is given to the teacher, it also secures a certain income for the ASC. ASPAT Colobane has been providing information on the dangers of alcohol and

drugs, and arranges various seminars on how to use a computer and use e-mail. The association also holds regular English courses. While such activities are aimed to directly enhance the capacity and situation of the younger people, there are also awareness campaigns that benefit the inhabitants in general. For example, the AJC organised a conference to heighten the understanding of the dangers of malaria and of various methods to protect oneself. They have also arranged a lecture on AIDS, where a doctor spoke in Wolof for everyone to understand, and there was distribution of condoms. In a similar manner, ASPAT organises various informational activities on the dangers related to drugs and alcohol, like distributing pamphlets during sporting and social events.

The neighbourhood associations arrange various social activities for their members. Excursions, social gatherings and small parties with music and dancing are organised from time to time. The ASPAT, ASC and the AJC take the youngest members on outings and to the beach during the summer holidays. These constitute valuable opportunities for the members to play and socialise. The social activities of neighbourhood associations are often used also to recruit new members, distribute information or generate a small income. When small parties and dances are organised for members and the inhabitants of the neighbourhood, there is an entrance fee that secures a financial return to the association. Among the social arrangements are also occasional religious activities, like a programme for the elders during Ramadan or religious conferences with information and discussion.

In addition, some neighbourhood associations engage in the cleaning of local mosques as part of their *Set-Setal* activities (clean-make clean, in Wolof). These also include a general rehabilitation and cleaning of the neighbourhood, like the removal of sand from the streets. According to Diouf (1992), the *Set-Setal* activities performed by Dakar youth in the late 1980s represented a political protest and reaction to the increasing urban poverty and the marginalisation of youth and women. It was a critique of the degradation of public infrastructure, corrupt political authorities and the general political crisis, although also a movement for improved living conditions (Diouf 2002a, 2002b). These combined political and recreational activities enhanced the environment and living conditions of local neighbourhoods in Dakar, and physically involved wall paintings and the cleaning of streets and neighbourhoods (Diouf 1992, 2002b). Such activities are still initiated in Colobane, and young people are still mobilised in these *Set-Setal* activities to participate in concrete work for a safe and pleasant neighbourhood. For local associations, it also provides as an opportunity

to collect funds, as I was told, the ASC seek donations from local households on such occasions.

The normal operation of the neighbourhood associations in Colobane and their regular activities, such as those mentioned above, are arranged through contributions from members. All have some form of membership payment at the base, like an annual membership fee, paying for a membership card and/or regular contributions from members, which may be fixed or flexible. In addition, there is usually a payment related to participation in special events. However, the expenses related to membership and participation are problematic for some of the youth in the area. So as not to exclude all from joining, most associations hold the purchase of a membership card or the payment of regular contributions not to be compulsory. To generate income, the neighbourhood associations sell cards to local inhabitants who support their activities. They also ask for donations from local households, for instance as the ASC has done during *Set-Setal* activities as mentioned above. The management of some associations also approach companies, wealthy individuals and personal contacts for donations. ASPAT Colobane is in a somewhat different situation. As a local branch of a national organisation, it can apply for an annual budget to finance regular activities. In addition, it may apply for additional funding for particular events if the members pay a substantial part of the costs through contributions. The rest of the neighbourhood associations which do not have these possibilities, are dependent upon additional and external resources to realise their goals and plans of a more extensive nature. While the internal generation of funds through membership contributions, the arrangement of various events and some local support secure the daily functioning and activities of the neighbourhood associations in Colobane, projects aimed to realise their goals demand additional and therefore external funding to be procured.

### ***Plans, projects and the need for external funding***

The stated goal of improving the situation of the inhabitants and developing Colobane demands activities besides the daily running of associations. Some have managed to start this work, but most associational leaders can only talk of plans, hopes or visions for future actions.

Many want to start educational activities to improve the prospects of the young and combat the bad reputation of the neighbourhood. They hope to help them improve their capacities

through training and education. For instance, the AJC has developed a plan for a socio-cultural centre with a library, teleservice and cybercafé, which will provide opportunities for the youth and secure income for the association. Through telephony and copying, sale of business cards and the production of payslips, they will be able to employ young people and generate revenue for the association. The second part of the project is to hold classes in languages, reading and writing, as well as in the use of computers and internet. According to representatives of the management, they have applied to several state institutions and NGOs for financial assistance to be able to construct and run this centre. Other associations, like the ASC, wish to start training and education projects, for instance vocational training for young girls and boys as hairdressers, tailors or carpenters. Another association wants to start a project where the youth work in groups to control the neighbourhood; this would both create jobs and income for the youth and help the security situation in Colobane.

As they know such projects and activities are dependent upon external funding, the neighbourhood associations must consider how to access it. Most seem already to have formulated plans and some have sent applications for financial support to realise these projects. They have applied to state institutions and NGOs. However, it seems as if they all wait for answers and funds that do not arrive. Despite their knowledge and capacity to orient themselves and place demands with various institutions, authorities and organisations, they have not achieved much funding. They find it discouraging. For instance, a representative of the AJC claimed that for each activity they arrange or each future project they plan, they send out correspondence to obtain financial support and show proof of their activities. He mentions requests that have been made to the Ministry of Local Affairs, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Youth, UNICEF, WHO, the presidential palace, the municipality of Dakar and the *commune d'arrondissement*, as well as to individual municipal councillors and members of parliament. Still, they experience a lack of response. Thus, it seems hard to secure reliable, if any, external funding for activities and future projects for most of the neighbourhood associations in Colobane, with the obvious exception of ASC, which receives continued financial support from the *commune d'arrondissement* and periodic subventions from the municipality of Dakar. However, to be able to realise their goals and plans, all neighbourhood associations are dependent upon external funding and therefore continue their struggle for economic resources.



### ***The demanding mobilisation of members and labour of leaders***

For a neighbourhood association to work properly, not only resources are needed, but also engaged members and committed and capable leaders.

As demonstrated in chapters 9 and 10, local associations and their management are mainly initiated by people who are well-resourced, either as individuals or a small group holding similar interests. Many are competent and well positioned individuals holding relatively high volumes of capital. Often, they are from important families of the neighbourhood, contributing with the social capital of a large network of contacts and the symbolic capital of recognition necessary for a leader to obtain legitimate authority. A few leaders are the children or grandchildren of imams, Lebou notables and former *délégués de quartier*, and several are from 'political families' in the neighbourhood (see also chapter 10). Quite a few of the leaders of the neighbourhood associations in Colobane seem to be in the process of pursuing further education when engaging in or starting the associations. Some also have associational experience or competence from engagement in politics, while others participate in the management of several associations in the neighbourhood simultaneously. For instance, one young man is actively engaged both in the ASC and the management of a local mosque in Colobane. The motivation of initiators and leaders of the neighbourhood associations is expressed to be the wish of doing something for the neighbourhood and its population, like counteracting its bad reputation and the marginalisation of its youth. On the other hand, it has become evident through the discussion above, particularly in chapter 10, that there are great benefits of a material and symbolic nature for leaders of local associations. Access to institutional economic capital may be important, but the symbolic power as a legitimate representative of the members is also of great value to associational leaders. Also in the neighbourhood associations in Colobane, it is often the initiators who end up as leaders or management members, through elections at the general assembly, where the positions of president, vice-president, a general secretary and treasurer with assistants, plus eventual leaders for sub-committees, are filled. However, formal positions and the linked responsibilities are not always respected; some management committees of neighbourhood associations work as a team ignoring individual responsibilities, while others function solely because of the personal engagement of a few individuals securing the daily running of the association. Thus, it is the informal relations and practices framed by the rather formal structure which are significant.

Several of the leaders of neighbourhood associations in Colobane complain of problems of mobilisation. They find it difficult to activate the inhabitants of the neighbourhood as members and to keep them motivated to contribute as active members, particularly when persistent effort and work is required and tangible results are not achieved in a short period of time. This makes it even more imperative for leaders and associations to access external finances to implement activities and reach goals. Sometimes, the resource and mobilisation problems of local associations lead to a cessation in their activities for shorter or longer periods of time.

Both members and management of various neighbourhood associations perceive the inhabitants of Colobane as reticent to participate in their activities. Associational leaders say they struggle to mobilise them, even if they exercise a certain pressure and create activities to make them interested. When an event is arranged, people do not arrive on time, even if it has been clearly announced; it is not until the end of the event that people show up, when they have discovered that it is interesting and other people are there. Management representatives complain that it is hard to recruit and mobilise members if they do not directly win or immediately earn something. This attitude of some inhabitants constitutes a problem for popular participation in general, and the initiatives of such collective organisations in particular. It is argued that the traditional clientelist practices of the political field (see chapter 7), where members and supporters receive material resources in exchange for their engagement or backing, creates problems for neighbourhood associations based on voluntariness. One leader depicts it as a problem of mentality that the inhabitants of Colobane are slow to participate in collective organising without receiving cash. One leader says that his association's active tactics of actively summoning the youth in the neighbourhood have led them to expect money if they show up. Simultaneously, this picture is complicated by the fact that local associations do have affiliations to political parties, and sometimes receive material resources to be distributed among members (this will be discussed further below). The established practices of clientelist politics and the related engagement for money make it difficult to run neighbourhood associations and secure a stable and committed group of members through time.

Easier recruitment of members in periods of success is reported by ASC leaders, who say that victory in football tournaments usually generates a big response and support from the

inhabitants of Colobane, where numerous persons come forward to take on responsibilities. Then again, they find most of them disappearing shortly afterwards. They say it is hard to create long lasting commitment from members, as the inhabitants of Colobane have not understood the idea of voluntariness and refuse the related investment of time and energy. As mentioned in chapter 9, the good response when initiating an association usually wears off after some time. The representative of a youth association in Colobane says that of the around 50 active members resulting from the general assembly that gathered about 100 persons in all, three years later only a handful of them were left, as many management members went away to pursue studies and to work.

Even if leaders and management members of local associations are often well-resourced individuals, the hard work of mobilising members, seeking funding and running the association on an unpaid and voluntary basis constitutes a challenge. However, there are also gains for leaders. They may build valuable competences through their responsibilities and work in the neighbourhood associations, just as members may develop capabilities through participation in their activities. Their experiences and training in the associations may constitute valuable knowledge and thus cultural capital needed for future employment. Along with the social capital of personal relations and connections gained from the position of leadership, this may create possibilities for a job and career. As discussed below, and as already illustrated in chapter 10, the leadership of a local association and its members provides possibilities for political influence and power, as well as access to material resources. Economic capital may be gained from the control over the association and its budget. The leadership of members provides a large social network and vital contacts, as well as symbolic capital in the form of a recognition and standing in the neighbourhood that is also derived from engaging in action for Colobane and its inhabitants.

When explaining their engagement, leaders often emphasise their wish to do something for their neighbourhood and its inhabitants. Many claim to want to use their capabilities and experience for the benefit of a local association, and so make a difference. As increased status, along with other symbolic and material benefits, may be gained from such discourse and engagement, there are obviously several reasons for the investment of time and energy of associational leaders. According to management members and associational leaders in Colobane, their large input of time in the association becomes problematic over time, particularly as they are not paid any wages. Most of the initiators of the youth associations are

students with the energy and time for involvement and hard work. However, as they progress into higher education and must give their studies higher priority, it becomes more difficult. Yet, the biggest challenge is when they finish their education, are expected to marry and are required to find work to bring additional income to the family. These obligations make it difficult to invest the same amount of time and energy into voluntary work for communal associations. As a result, neighbourhood associations lose many resource persons. This has been experienced, for example by ASPAT, where vital management members have quit to start jobs or taken opportunities to migrate to Europe in the hope of improving their situation and that of their family. Some associations try to ease the transition by recruiting new youngsters into leading positions, although with the backing of founders still participating in the management. Associational leaders hold it to be essential to have a management composed of members who are well-resourced, willing to work for the association and thus help in the battle to secure necessary financial resources and to mobilise members.

However, while holding a position as an associational leader often provides symbolic power and popular recognition, there seems to be a general scepticism towards leaders that is sometimes expressed by members and inhabitants. As material resources are in general scarcity, there have been incidents of mismanagement in local associations in Colobane, like private loans from collective resources and sometimes a failure of repayment (see chapter 9). As discussed in earlier chapters, there is a general tendency for legitimate authority no longer to be as automatic or unquestioned as in earlier times. It must be negotiated and attained through personal merit and convincing practices. Also, the discursive changes related to the *Alternance* and societal changes in Senegal highlight transparent, accountable and democratic leadership and management as an ideal. This seems to affect not only political authorities and the management of local mosques (see chapters 7 and 9), but also associational life in Colobane. Thus, the general process of change is found in the local political, religious and social fields of the neighbourhood. In relation to the neighbourhood associations, it puts a certain pressure on their leaders. Even if they are not paid wages, a management position in a local association provides potential access to economic capital. In addition, alliances or relations with politicians and political parties may also offer financial gain. Such practices make leaders of neighbourhood associations susceptible to rumours and allegations of fraud and negligence. Often, they face accusations of ‘eating’ the money of their association or working only for their personal benefit. Treasurers are accused of, and some prosecuted, for borrowing from the cash box. Associational leaders have experienced difficulties in recruiting

members due to rumours of the leaders' corrupt practices and acceptance of the personal patronage of local politicians, including putting the association at their disposal.

This situation involving allegations against associational leaders is also a part of the competition within the associational field, which will be discussed below, as it may be used to create internal division and further problems of mobilisation for rival associations. A leader told me of the example of two girls who were active members of his association, but suddenly stopped coming to meetings. When approached by the leaders, they explained that some girls belonging to another youth association in the neighbourhood had spread rumours that the founders had withdrawn from the management and left their positions to others because they had 'eaten' all the money and sneaked away from their responsibilities.

Thus, the rivalry among local associations and accusations of fraud form a burden to associational leaders, who invest much of their time and energy into the associations. While they harvest personal benefits from the association and are able to work for the benefit of the neighbourhood and its inhabitants to a certain degree, they are dependent upon mobilising members and realising planned projects. To uphold the support of the local inhabitants and be able to motivate members, resources are needed to carry out activities and reach goals. This depends on access to additional resources, and makes it vital for leaders and management of neighbourhood associations to continue the struggle for external funding.

## **Access to resources and relations to the political field**

### ***The clientelism of political parties***

As mentioned in chapter 10, the financial resources of associations are not only comprised of the contributions of members, but may also derive from an exchange of resources with politicians or political parties. Both members and management representatives of neighbourhood associations in Colobane hold political affiliation as vital in the struggle for material resources.

All the neighbourhood associations seem to search for economic capital, in the form of financial resources or material assets, to be able to accomplish their goals through planned

activities. They have experienced the clientelism of political parties or politicians to benefit associations if leaders are recruited into party politics and thereby access resources for the association or to redistribute to the members as political supporters. These practices are regulated through a logic of exchange, where the economic capital distributed through party structures is exchanged for political capital in the form of symbolic support and/or votes. This finding is contrary to that of Diouf (2002b), claiming such associations to evade the clientelist logics of political integration. As will be further discussed below, I argue that neighbourhood associations in Colobane are very much part of and must relate to the struggles and logic of the political field, although they also face the paradox of a concurrent discourse and evolving logic which are rejecting politics.

The negotiated access to resources through the clientelist networks of political parties seems to be an integral part of the associational life in Colobane. An association leader argues that in some cases, it is the very reason or logic behind the creation of some local associations. For instance, a politician may initiate an association by encouraging a resource person to get involved in community work by informing him or her of sources of funding, often related to the party or the state institution where the politician or party control the distribution of subventions. The resource person is then expected to refer to the politician in positive terms and motivate the members of the association to support the actual politician or party. This leader describes the approaches of politicians as part of an intense and continuous struggle to obtain the symbolic capital and thus the political power necessary to secure a position in a political party, state structure or elected body. Politicians and party factions compete not only for legitimate representation, but also for a political position that will provide access to economic capital. The distribution of resources through clientelist exchanges of resources is used by politicians and political parties to improve their position in the internal competition of politics (see chapter 7). Thus, as stated by a young man from Colobane, a politician will use all his or her power to counter the actions of associations which refuse to support him or her, depriving them of subsidies and other material needed for proper and sustainable functioning, just as they will reward those who back them accordingly.

If not initiated by a politician, it seems that most neighbourhood associations sooner or later will be approached by local politicians, who will try to co-opt the leaders and management into their party. In this way, the politicians hope to create an image of themselves as responsible individuals who engage to improve the situation of the neighbourhood. This may

grant them the recognition of the inhabitants, and possibly increase their symbolic capital, a power vital in the struggles of the political field. Several associational leaders claim that politicians try to persuade them and their members that they are worth supporting, usually through promising material benefits for the associations, their members and leaders. If the support of the members is obtained, the position of the individual politician is strengthened as she/ he can show that a certain amount of supporters may secure votes at elections. This negotiated and clientelist exchange of resources with connections in the political field may secure vital material resources for the neighbourhood associations to reach their goals and secure active members. Thus, they are continually participating in the games of the political field.

Both leaders and members of the neighbourhood associations in Colobane claim that it is essential to be involved in politics or hold established relations with politicians to obtain external funding. However, the resources distributed through the clientelist networks of politicians and political parties are not solely the internal resources of political parties or the personal assets of individual politicians. They seem also to be appropriated from state institutions and to involve the steered distribution of legitimate funds, according to the logic of political clientelism.

### ***Clientelist distribution of elite appropriated state resources and official grants***

As mentioned in chapters 3 and 7, politicians frequently gain access to economic capital through their positions in the political field, particularly those related to the state. This is the argument of Bayart (1993) in this account of the politics of the belly. With regard to the representatives of the *commune d'arrondissement* of Gueule Tapée, Fass and Colobane, there have been rumours of mismanagement and incidents of private appropriation of public goods. Politicians report that such appropriated public resources are put to instrumental use for the benefit of the party or their private political candidature, through redistribution to clients and supporters. In chapter 7, this was exemplified by the instrumental use of the 'black funds' of the commune; the political representatives controlling the budget would extract resources which were distributed to past, present and future supporters and clients to keep their positions of power. Leaders and members of neighbourhood associations in Colobane claim that the allocation of legal public funds and official grants follow the mentioned clientelist logic too, as they are directed towards nurturing relations with and securing political support

among associational members and leaders.

Representatives of several neighbourhood associations consider their trouble obtaining financial support from the *commune d'arrondissement*, the municipality of Dakar and other state structures as resulting from their lack of political relations. They claim that if you do not 'do' politics, your association is not helped. Thus, associations without connections to a particular political party or important politician lose in the struggle for material resources. Quite a few associational leaders hold that the PDS, now controlling the state structure, and various elected bodies, strongly favour their own supporters and thus also associations with connections to their party. They hold that it is impossible to receive financial support from the *Fonds National de Promotion de la Jeunesse* (FNJP) without being related to the PDS, as they favour only the individuals, projects and associations that actively support the party. The same argument is put forward in relation to the *commune d'arrondissement*, where it is argued that only associations with relations to a representative of the administration or an important municipal councillor will obtain a subvention; it does not matter what projects you are presenting or how well they are planned. One of them illustrates his argument by claiming that the association to a deputy mayor belonged obtained great support, while others have not even received answers to their requests.

A former politician confirms that representatives of political parties, holding positions in the state bureaucracy or other governing structures, tend to distribute resources and grant funding to associations run by their supporters. He says this established practice of the PS is now continued under PDS rule. According to a young man in Colobane this has contributed to transhumance also in the associational life of the neighbourhood. As explained in chapter 7, there was massive national and local transhumance among the political class in the aftermath of the *Alternance* in 2000. This tendency of struggling for closeness to political powers and thus also material resources, seem to be shared by local associations. Even if they know they will be used for propagandist purposes, it is vital to support the party in power to benefit from the clientelist distribution of appropriated state resources or allocation of official grants. This is supported by the attitudes of leaders and members of the neighbourhood associations in Colobane who hold that for local associations to access needed external funding, connections to individuals in state institutions or the party in power is vital.



### ***Formal requirements for public subventions***

It is not only political connections that determine associations' access to resources, there are also formal requirements which must be met to obtain public subventions. Among these are public registration and the possession of a *récépissé*, an official document confirming that the association is officially acknowledged and recorded. Thus, the capacity of neighbourhood associations to follow and comply with formal requirements is also relevant when it comes to accessing public funding.

A common conception among associational leaders is that the history of public regulation of local associations is related to the need and wish of the PS regime for control over collective mobilisation and organisations. The formal requirements of the public authorities are still in operation and have consequences for the present associational life in Colobane. The associations which do not meet formal requirements or lack the capabilities to obtain the necessary information or to make changes to fulfil conditions have a limited potential for accessing public subventions and win the competition for communal grants. The demands and fulfilment of formal requirements have profited the ASCs in Senegal and contributed to the strong position of the association in Colobane. Being an association allowed and promoted during the PS regime, the ASC Colobane holds a particular position in the neighbourhood. The association enjoys sustained and practically automatic financing from the *commune d'arrondissement*. The ASC is often referred to as the mother structure and most important association of the neighbourhood, both by its own leaders and those of other local associations.

ASC representatives explain how they respect their legal obligations by following the body of legislation and decrees regulating the formalisation of local associations, administered by the Ministry of Interior Affairs. They say that a decree from 1996 about the creation of local organisations is vital for all neighbourhood associations to be familiar with; it provides knowledge of where to apply, and how to obtain, grants and subsidies. This requires the association to be formally registered and recognised by the authorities, and the ASC had this arranged already in 1997 with the help of the *mairie*. Through being assisted with obtaining the needed documents they were easily granted money and the ASC Colobane now receives annual subventions, both from the municipality of Dakar and the *commune d'arrondissement*. This continued after the *Alternance*, but the representatives stress that they needed to apply

pressure to have the money transferred to their account, even if the annual amount was doubled. An ASC representative holds that this subvention is part of the jurisdiction of the commune; through the decentralisation the commune budgets must include support of local sports, of which they are now the main beneficiary.

Representatives of the other neighbourhood associations in Colobane complain of their problems accessing public subventions due to their lack of formality, or possibility to comply with the form valued by public authorities and state institutions. Some have experienced approved financial assistance being stopped due to formal conditions not being fulfilled. For instance, a youth association lost a substantial grant because they did not hold a bank account, and on another occasion the transfer of money was stopped when the distributor discovered that the funds were earmarked for ASCs. Local associations are creative in trying to find solutions in their struggle for essential resources. In one case, a local youth organisation tried to make arrangements with the ASC to use their bank account to access granted funding. The representatives of the ASC claim they have helped out other local associations in this way on several occasions, but the leaders of this particular association recall that the ASC declined their proposition, and they consequently lost the money.

Thus, many of the neighbourhood associations in Colobane struggle to access external funding to realise planned projects and activities. Those who do not comply with the formal requirements of the state or fail to negotiate themselves into a client role in the logic of resource exchange in the political field see their financial situation weakened.

## **A rejection of politics and new discourse on partnerships with NGOs**

### ***The rejection of politics***

While political affiliation may provide access to resources, it may also involve a threat to the legitimacy of leaders and lead to conflicts within associations. The general political crisis affecting national politics (see chapter 4) and its local manifestations (see chapter 7) influences not only party politics and local politicians, but also other actors of the

neighbourhood, due to their links to the political field and the relational nature of the local political space.

The current tendency to dismiss politics among local inhabitants thus affects the functioning and positioning of the neighbourhood associations in Colobane. Associational members and leaders have poor experiences of relations with politicians, such as repeated unkept promises and the lack of response to enquiries with state institutions. This seems to have disappointed them and added to the general crisis of legitimacy of politics. The disillusionment may be exemplified by the experiences with party politics of a particular young man which made him reject political involvement for his association. He was approached by a local politician who encouraged him to create a youth group for her party. He accepted and managed to recruit about 250 young people from all parts of Colobane into the party registers. This involvement in party politics was not a result of personal political conviction, but the outcome of a negotiation with the politician regarding an exchange of resources. In return for the mobilisation of supporters, he was promised financing for communal projects that would benefit the neighbourhood. However, more than a year after his effort for the party, this promise had not been fulfilled. Hence he suspended his political activities and withdrew from politics. The image of party politics as a dirty business of unkept promises, performed by politicians solely for their own benefit, was again confirmed. When he later founded an association in the neighbourhood, he rejected all informal suggestions or direct approaches from politicians of a clientelist exchange of resources.

These attitudes and the continued discourse of politics as dirty creates an ambivalence with regard to the political connections of neighbourhood associations and the political aspects of associational life in general. While some see the logic of politics as harmful to the associations and threatening to their recognition and that of their leaders, others see political relations as good and profitable. As they are essential to secure material benefits, some consider them a necessary evil to be able to realise goals and make a real influence. However, the aversion towards politics causes several members and leaders of various neighbourhood associations in Colobane to promote a new discourse that it is necessary to engage in associational life in a new way, outside the political field. Some hold that this tendency has already led resourceful individuals in the neighbourhood to prefer engagement in local associational life over the unfair logic and 'dirty business' of politics, as a way to contribute to the development of the country and their neighbourhood.

Indeed, the proliferation of neighbourhood associations is seen by some as a sign of the population taking charge of their situation and the problems of the neighbourhood (Cruise O'Brien 2003, Diop 2002, Piga 2002). As community organising has a long history, an associational leader in Colobane claims that it is only the wish to realise projects without financial assistance from political connections that is new. However, it seems to be difficult to make a total break with the routinised practices of the past, particularly due to the financial needs of the local associations. Even leaders who are against playing the clientelist game of political parties claim it is hard not to fall back on established resource exchanges. To uphold the activities of the association, realise projects that secure members and contribute to improvement of the neighbourhood, external funding is needed. This makes it tempting to take up the proposition of a politician who guarantees financial assistance in exchange for political support.

There seems to be something ambiguous or even questionable in the accounts of associational leaders in Colobane. Many follow the new discourse rejecting politics and therefore declare their association to be apolitical, refusing approaches from politicians. Simultaneously, they often accuse other associations or their leaders of serving as the instruments of local politicians. This is explained as a result of the need for financial assistance, but representatives are often quick to point out that this is not the case with their association. It seems as if associational leaders face a parallel dilemma to the one experienced by local politicians (see chapter 7) who must handle the compound pressure between the new discourse of a transparent and accountable politics and the expected and routinised clientelism demanded by their supporters. In a similar vein, local associations and their leaders are faced with two concurrent logics; the rejection of politics promoted through a new discourse on community organising and the struggle for external resources, traditionally secured through clientelist distribution from political connections. Even if they need to secure economic resources to uphold their activities and implement planned projects, the problems and risks related to political involvement must also be considered. The discourse on community organising outside of the political field may risk associations and their leaders losing recognition, and thus threaten their existence and position, if they become too closely affiliated with local politicians and their lack of legitimacy in the eyes of many inhabitants.

Internal cleavages are mentioned as another possible consequence of political involvement,

both by members and leaders of neighbourhood associations in Colobane. They argue it will intensify the problems with mobilisation of members and create division and discord among them as supporters of different parties. It is also incompatible with some of the neighbourhood associations' goal of uniting all the inhabitants of Colobane. There are examples of how political involvement is not accepted by members. For instance, an ASC president who obtained a central political position for the PS wanted to use the association in politics. He was rejected by the rest of the management and members, who opposed his candidature for the position in their association. Others hold that the internal competition of party politics is transferred to local associational life through their affiliations. They claim that the antagonism between local associations is partly a result of their connection with competing political parties, factions or individual political representatives. This will again prevent the associations from joining forces for the common good of Colobane and the benefit of its inhabitants. The rejection of political alliances in associational life is particularly prominent among young people.

### *Generational differences*

The view of the young people in the neighbourhood associations in Colobane that participation in the clientelist logic of resource exchange is not at all beneficial for the neighbourhood is well illustrated by statement of an associational leader, claiming the negotiated exchange of resources related to political clientelism involves an exploitation and deception of the inhabitants and associations of Colobane. He holds that political support is seldom reimbursed with the promised material assistance, and sees the clientelist spoils distributed to local associations as not constituting any long term or substantial gain. He thinks that it is naïve to participate in this game, as it is an arrangement only for the benefit of the politicians and political parties as patrons. These views are presented as part of a generational change, involving an increased awareness and change of discourse among the young. This was evident also in relation to the managerial changes of local mosques discussed in chapter 9. The young people partly blame their parents or the older generations of the neighbourhood for establishing and continuing these practices of political clientelism, and claim that they now want to do things differently. As they see no improvements in the situation of Colobane, and even long-term and pressing problems of pipes, sewers and health infrastructure remain unresolved, they withdraw from politics. Some young people go as far as accusing not only politicians, but also their parents' generation of being only preoccupied

with satisfying their individual needs, not thinking about the long-term interest of the neighbourhood and its inhabitants. It is argued that the older generation should have refused these unfavourable exchanges which are seen as despicable and amounting to buying people. Instead, they should have demanded and negotiated something that would make a difference or made future change possible.

Some associational leaders and members in Colobane claim that the new practices of associations in rejecting political affiliation is only possible due to collaboration with NGOs. These are seen as potential new sources of funding and advancement for the associations, and thus necessary for viable community organising and development outside the political field.

### *A hope related to NGOs*

In a situation where it may be difficult to access external funding if formal requirements for public subventions are not followed or the clientelist logic guiding the resource distribution of political parties is rejected, partnership with NGOs is presented as a solution. The discursive shift where politics is rejected seems to involve a strong sense of hope related to NGO collaboration. This is probably related to the growing influence of NGOs in local development projects in Senegal in recent years (Sarr 2006). It is also part of a global trend, particularly spread by donor agencies and the dismantling of state tasks. Sarr (2006) argues that the proliferation of national NGOs reflects both a push for greater democracy and improved governance, and the Senegalese state's failure to provide for its population. Associational leaders in Colobane foresee great possibilities for new community organising and viable projects through the financial assistance of national and international NGOs. Some even claim it is the only solution in a situation where both members and leaders discard political involvement; local associations must seek other partners, national or preferably international, to access the material resources needed to carry out planned projects. Management members argue that such NGO cooperation might motivate the inhabitants of Colobane to engage in neighbourhood associations, as they see it possible to achieve results local political representatives and state authorities have not been able to produce. One leader claims it to be the prescription for future community development and for uniting inhabitants in work within neighbourhood associations that join forces outside the realm of politics in collaboration with NGOs.

However, this seems to be more of a discursive shift than a real change of practices. While some of the neighbourhood associations have made enquiries with, and sent applications for financial support to, various NGOs, none report the establishment of a collaboration or financial assistance. The AJC alone has created a relevant contact. While most of their approaches towards such organisations for financial support and future collaboration have not paid off, they have secured relations to and funding from UNICEF. After sending several letters and providing requested additional information on the association and its activities, UNICEF supported an awareness campaign on AIDS and provided the AJC with 100 t-shirts, caps and other material. This has encouraged the management to draw up new projects that might interest NGOs and international organisations and aim to build partnerships and obtain assistance for activities in the future.

A politically-engaged youth of the neighbourhood expresses that partnerships with NGOs might provide a new way to solve communal problems, too. He holds that the population of Colobane traditionally have been using their membership of different informal associations and the strong logics and regulated practices of solidarity and mutual help to ease their harsh situation. He stresses that it is now vital also to realise the possibilities and importance of NGOs, not only with regard to local associations, but also in the context of community development and problem solving. He argues that the youth of Colobane should engage in local associations to create relations with NGOs. This could provide them with valuable experience and training that would benefit them as individuals, create opportunities for regular income to the associations and contribute to a general improvement in the neighbourhood. He even claims this to be the only way to make radical changes in the neighbourhood and improve the situation of its inhabitants in the future.

However, as signalled above, the rejection of political alliances for neighbourhood associations and the plans of collaboration with NGOs seem to be mainly on the discursive level. Although these imply important changes in the local political field in general, and associational life in particular, there are significant continuities in established practices. While associational leaders and members may see politics as a dirty business and want their association to be autonomous from the political game, their political involvement is necessary for economic reasons. The tension between these different principles generates a contradictory logic of practice framing the actions and strategies of local associations. It also constitutes a difficult tightrope-walking exercise for associational leaders in their mission not

only to access resources, but also to mobilise members and protect their position as recognised leaders. This all has an influence on and is affected by the competition and rivalry within local associational life.

## **Competition leading to fragmentation of local associational life**

The struggle for economic resources, the associations' relations with political parties and representatives, and a history of rivalry and lack of collaboration between associations seem to create an associational life marked by fragmentation, competition and problems of mobilisation.

### ***The history of rivalry***

There are thus several sources of the fragmentation of local associational life; economy, politics and society. The neighbourhood seem to be marked by a history of competition which affects the relations between the neighbourhood associations. For instance, ASC representatives explain how there was great competition between football teams and various ASCs in the neighbourhood in the past. This caused problems and they did not manage to win football matches either. After the negotiation of an elder who called a meeting to propose they unite and join forces to beat other teams in football, the present ASC Colobane was created.

However, this did not make the ASC free of conflict or power struggles. According to a long-time member, the association is marked by internal divisions that affect the election and working of the management. Earlier, they tried to recruit representatives from all the major areas of the neighbourhood, as the composition of the management has been a source of conflict. Still, at the time of the fieldwork, most of the management members were from Baye Laye area, something the management claim has contributed to a particularly good mobilisation of members in that area and to good leadership. Others hold it to be a cause of tension and dispute. This is related to how youths from one particular area often hold prejudices towards youths from other areas, something that is experienced by most neighbourhood associations. For instance, a leader claims youths from Baye Laye are negative towards the management of their association. As the people holding leading positions are mainly from Khock, they were held not to be able to lead an association working



for the whole of Colobane, as there would be different opinions related to the various areas and the management would work only for the benefit of their own area. This relates to an opinion, often humorously expressed, that the strong position of the Lebous of Khock makes them want to control, administer and lead all activities, groups and associations in Colobane.

This manifestly contributes to refute the romanticised notion of a harmonic civil society free from conflict and inequalities. Indeed, the rivalry within the neighbourhood can be seen at all levels; between people in the same street, among smaller groups and quarters of the neighbourhood, as well as between the various areas of Colobane and among its neighbourhood associations. This is confirmed by a young man who reports a lack of unity and cohesion between the youth of the neighbourhood. He claims the identification with smaller parts and areas of the neighbourhood has created general division and contributed to the fragmentation of associational life as the rivalry fosters continued competition.

### ***Competition related to the battle for and inequalities in access to resources***

As discussed above, the battle for resources and particularly access to external financial assistance affects the relations between neighbourhood associations. In the struggle to secure funding, the associations use political affiliations, compliance with formal requirements and/or relations with international organisations and NGOs. This battle and the inequalities among the neighbourhood associations create a climate of competition and feed into the history of rivalry. There are thus also economic and political sources of fragmentation of local associational life.

As argued above, political involvement may be a strategy to secure external funding for neighbourhood associations. However, not only is this in conflict with the new discourse of members and leaders, claiming autonomy from the political field for local associations that instead should seek collaboration with NGOs. It is also held to increase the competition and rivalry among neighbourhood associations. Both members and leaders claim that the opposition between the associations often has political sources. Some declare that politicians finance local associations to defeat the supporters and associations of their political adversaries. Others claim certain neighbourhood associations are created by politicians as instruments serving them in the internal competition of formal politics; helping them in factional struggles or their personal battle for a position of power. In this context, the

involvement of neighbourhood associations in party politics is seen to magnify the rivalry among them and hinder them from joining forces. Both hidden and openly expressed political links are claimed to fragment the associational life of the neighbourhood and hamper the potential of associations.

The struggle for economic resources and the inequalities between associations in this regard also seems to result in increased competition and fragmentation. Thus, inequalities in capacities and access to resources between neighbourhood associations in Colobane are a source of conflict. This is evident with regard to the ASC which holds a prominent position; it enjoys great economic assistance and has been provided with the opportunity to aid other local associations in less favourable positions. The representatives of ASC Colobane hold that the ASC has served as an intermediary in the distribution of money to other associations in the neighbourhood that have not been able to meet formal requirements for funding. Yet, other accounts seem to indicate that despite, or because of, the advantageous situation of the ASC, its management has been reluctant to help and collaborate with others. In the climate of competition they have seen them as contenders challenging the position of the ASC. This has, in turn, again created and invigorated conflicts.

The reluctance of the ASC to assist or collaborate with other associations is confirmed by the accounts of various associational members and leaders. Some also claim that the ASC tries to co-opt those who make contact. If refused, the ASC will not interact and perceive the association as an enemy. However, it is hard to know if these allegations are true, as they may reflect the many rumours circulating as part of the competition between neighbourhood associations. It seems that personal relations are decisive in the few cases of associations collaborating with the ASC. For instance, the leaders of the football school providing the ASC with new players are active in the ASC too. Despite close links to the ASC management, many associational leaders report hostility and incomprehension. They tell of numerous rejections to their approaches to the ASC for joint action. Also, the representatives of the ASC report that they do not cooperate with any of the neighbourhood associations in Colobane, and only sporadically engage women's groups to prepare food and drinks for the players during tournaments. Leaders of other associations also claim that the intense competition among local association is not as present with regard to the women's groups and *dahiras*. They report successful and unproblematic collaboration in the arrangement of debates on AIDS, awareness campaigns related to malaria or a *Set-Setal*, as described above.

The rivalry between the associations, which is related both to history, political involvement and competition for economic resources, is evident not only with regard to negative rumours circulating in the neighbourhood but also critique of other association by both associational members and leaders. In an attempt to show how the ASC does not fulfil its obligations, and thus could delegitimise its leading position in the neighbourhood, youth in general and associational leaders call them the AS (sports association), as they do not arrange any cultural activities (as implied by the C in the name) but only focus on the sport of football. The intense competition in local associational life also manifests itself in scepticism towards others outside their association. For example, a local leader says they have to be careful about revealing their future plans and projects, as they have had their ideas stolen, both by individuals and institutions. They hold that they have been approached by people who have shown an interest in their projects and later have presented them as their own. One member even claims that various state authorities have taken their projects presented in applications for financial support. In these cases, they have received no answer, but later see their projects presented by a politician as his or her idea, or as part of the activities of the commune. Therefore, they now take precautions; just as they no longer leave their project descriptions when they apply for economic support, they will not reveal their ideas to individuals who might spread or use them as their own. In fact, many associational leaders claimed the lack of collaboration between the associations in Colobane is nurtured by this fear of being robbed of ideas, as well as of money or personnel. There is a belief that those who seek assistance or collaboration only want to get their hands on the resources of others. It is obvious that these attitudes and the harsh climate of competition make it hard for local associations to join forces to create the community development that is their goal.

The president of an association in Colobane describes how the competition among associations and the battle for recognition and resources may cause awkward outcomes. He provides the example of the arrangement of *Set-Setal* activities mentioned above: If a neighbourhood association spreads information that they are arranging a *Set-Setal* on a particular date, they may experience that many other local associations rush to say they are arranging one the same day, too, coincidentally. They are eager to get the same attention, recognition, supporters and possible resources as the association initiating the activity. Other times, the result may be the opposite; the inhabitants adhering to other associations refuse to take part in what is supposed to be a shared activity when it is arranged by a ‘competitor’.

This leads some people standing outside their own houses without participating while others clean up their street and outside their house. Thus, the rivalry among the associations of Colobane creates numerous problems and seems to prevent the associations from obtaining results.

The history of rivalry, political affiliations, and the unequal access to resources has led to an antagonism between the neighbourhood associations in Colobane. This fragmentation with societal, political and economic sources seems to hinder collaboration and joint action to develop the neighbourhood, which is the declared goal of most of the neighbourhood associations in Colobane.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has analysed the central processes and struggles of associational life in Colobane, related to its neighbourhood associations. These perform various functions and activities in the neighbourhood. There are social activities which create possibilities for leisure time and recreation, such as sports, dances and music events. Local associations also arrange informational and educational activities aimed at improving the situation of the inhabitants of the neighbourhood. Some do important social work, as they organise young people and help improve their capacities and possibilities. Such regular activities are financed through members' contributions or local fundraising. However, most neighbourhood associations in Colobane aim to launch projects that will improve the situation in and help develop the neighbourhood. This requires additional and external funding. The struggle for resources is not the only worry of associational leaders. There is also the problem of mobilisation, as a spirit for voluntarism seems to be lacking in the neighbourhood. According to leaders and members, this is due to the low educational level and difficult situation of the population who are oriented towards income generating activities. In addition, the established clientelist practices of local politics, where inhabitants are remunerated for support and attendance, make some members expect material resources in return for their associational engagement. Thus, there is hard work for their leaders, who invest much time and energy into local association in particular periods of their lives. There are great benefits to gain from this investment, too. Still, this profit is dependent upon them functioning as good leaders who can

mobilise members, secure external funding and thus struggle and compete for resources, often through links in the local political field.

Access to external funding has traditionally been related to contacts with local politicians and political parties, through a clientelist exchange of resources. The political patrons promise and may provide material assistance in exchange for the symbolic support provided by associational leaders and members. Such political alliances seem to guide the distribution of state resources and public grants, too. Politicians, factions and political parties use their access to economic capital to secure political capital in the form of support and votes from neighbourhood associations. This provides vital assets for them in the internal competition of the political field. Thus, political alliances may help local associations secure needed funding. However, there are also certain formal requirements that must be fulfilled to attain public subventions. This has favoured those capable of complying with the standards of public authorities, and secured a prominent position for the local ASC. The inequalities among associations in accessing external funding create certain difficulties, particularly when coupled with party politics.

However, a new discourse on the rejection of politics and benefits of partnership with NGOs seem to mark local associational life, and particularly the neighbourhood associations in Colobane. The general political crisis and poor experiences of associational members and leaders with relations to local politicians and political parties has confirmed the general crisis of legitimacy of politics. Many describe political alliances as part of the dirty game of politics marked by unkept promises. This makes the neighbourhood associations and their leaders face a dilemma parallel to that of local politicians; trapped between the discourse and logic of transparent and accountable politics on the one hand, and the established practices of political clientelism and spread of state resources demanded by supporters on the other. Local associations must handle the simultaneous demands of the new discourse on community organisation rejecting politics and the need for economic resources that are accessed through exactly political alliances existing due to the clientelist exchange of material and symbolic resources. The tension between these different principles generates a contradictory logic of practice for the members and leaders of neighbourhood associations.

The struggle for economic resources, the related alliances to politicians and a history of rivalry within the neighbourhood seem to contribute to a strong competition in local

associational life. The result is an antagonism and scepticism generating rumours that delegitimise competitors and create suspicion with regard to associations that seek assistance or collaboration. The climate of rivalry makes local associations reject such approaches and refuse to discuss plans and projects with outside individuals or associations. The end result is a fragmentation of the local associational life, of composite economic, political and social origin, which obstructs fruitful teamwork and co-ordination of activities that could help the neighbourhood associations reach their goal of developing Colobane and improving the situation of its inhabitants.

## **12. Changing continuities in network politics**

In this concluding chapter, I will concentrate on the main findings and conclusions of the study in relation to the research question and underlying question presented in the introductory chapter. The research question asked what characterises local political practices and the local political space in Colobane, in order to address how inhabitants engage to promote their interests and to explore their manifold ways of ‘doing’ politics, according to the possibilities and constraints they face. The underlying question motivating the research is how local political practices, discourses and processes relate to the wider societal and national political changes in Senegal, outlined in the Introduction and further discussed in chapter 4. The various analytical chapters have addressed these questions from different angles, yet a similar pattern is set across these societal fields and arenas. The purpose of this last concluding chapter is to draw these diverse but parallel stories together, in order to outline the main findings of the study.

The major findings are structured around two fundamental features. First, local politics in Colobane is marked by multi-activity in network politics. This entails the importance of personal contacts and social networks in diverse fields to access both symbolic and material resources. Secondly, there are significant discursive changes and some altered practices affecting the local political space, but also striking continuities in social and political practices. Thus, local politics in Colobane can be said to be characterised by changing continuities: multifaceted tendencies towards democratisation, combined with flexibly adjusted clientelistic practices in everyday life. Both these features of local politics in Colobane resonate with and are closely linked to the established political practices and processes of change at national level. The local findings can help elucidate many of the recent developments in national politics after Wade and the PDS came to power and spread popular hopes of democratic consolidation and solutions to the economic crisis.

### **Multi-activity in network politics**

Local politics in Colobane are characterised by network politics, just as are national politics and the Senegalese social contract. Network politics construe people as a vital asset, and make

the habitual and strategic building and nurturing of social relationships and networks central to political mobilisation. Such personalised politics lead to the direct or indirect involvement of personal relations and contacts in individual political endeavours. Throughout the analysis of this dissertation, social capital has been demonstrated as vital for access to both symbolic and material resources. Social capital is an important means for access to political power, economic capital and status / symbolic recognition. In other words, social capital may be converted into symbolic, political and economic capital due to the exchanges constituting and consecrating social relationships (Bourdieu 1986). The context of network politics in Senegal and Colobane – the socio-economic crisis – makes economic or material resources essential, both for those struggling for legitimate authority and those trying to improve their living conditions and cope with everyday expenses through the mobilisation of individual or collective relations.

Multi-activity refers to how local inhabitants engage in a great number of social relations and networks to promote their interests and gain access to desired resources, whether it is the symbolic capital needed by an authority to uphold power and gain legitimacy, or the economic capital needed by an individual struggling to secure basic needs and make ends meet in a context of poverty. As every social investment is not guaranteed to secure profit, multi-activity is a habitual strategy. Thus, people seldom concentrate on one single relationship, but rather engage in and nurture as many social relationships and contacts as possible. While social networks of family, friends and neighbours are important; this dissertation has focused on other types of individual or collective engagement and relations, which are often treated mainly as part of the political strategies of elites. These include initiating or accepting individual relations and exchanges, often following a vertical patron-client nature, as well as nurturing horizontal relations through engaging in groups or associations that create bonds of mutual obligations and assistance.

In Colobane, local political actors engage in multi-activity in network politics to promote their short- and long-term interests. They cultivate relations that are both vertical and horizontal in nature within various fields, and engage in relation to different formal and informal authorities and institutions. This has been discussed in the analytical chapters as part of the struggles, negotiations and practices of separate fields within the local political space. The simplification inherent in this division into separate fields may hide their overlapping and blurred boundaries, as well as the plurality and parallelism of engagements and thus multi-



activity of particular actors. This is very much present, however, for both elites and more marginalised actors.

The elites of the local political space fight for legitimate authority and recognition, but also access to economic resources that may help secure this, due to the material basis of politics. Their multi-activity takes various forms, as they engage in a wide range of strategies and practices to build and keep their legitimacy, which is constantly challenged either by internal competition or in negotiations with local inhabitants. For instance, a local politician must relate to the competition with other political parties, as well as that within his or her own party. This demands working on one's positioning within the local party or a particular faction, often linking local and national levels of party politics. Due to the personal mark of network politics, this might imply 'doing' politics for or supporting a particular person of authority within the party. At the same time, local politicians must engage in multiple relations to local inhabitants to secure personal supporters and militants for the faction or party. As shown, for instance in chapters 7 and 11, this often involves an exchange where economic resources are traded for political support. These clientelistic practices and logics demonstrate the link between local and national politics, where the negotiated exchange of resources is prominent. Due to the general crisis of politics, and signs of continuing practices of corruption and clientelist distribution of state resources also under the new team of the *commune d'arrondissement*, it is vital for local politicians to demonstrate real engagement for the neighbourhood and its inhabitants. Thus, they try to depict themselves as different from the delegitimised party politicians. This may be solved through multi-activity across fields. For instance, a female politician in the neighbourhood is the leader of a local *dahira*, a women's association and its savings groups. This leadership and local engagement saw her recruited into politics, as her personal qualities, extensive social network and recognition as a legitimate leader of these associations provided the symbolic power and vital arenas necessary for mobilising people. Other politicians nurture contact with the notables of the neighbourhood, make donations and regular visits the local mosque, or help to start smaller development projects and groups.

Many of the local inhabitants, who are not among the elite, fight for access to resources in a context of poverty. They must relate to the short-term perspective of fulfilling daily and basic needs, but also aim to improve their living conditions and increase political influence, since long-term goals also include a hope for democratic politics. Others struggle simply to

improve their position by accumulating wealth and power, or by signalling their symbolic power, and thus status and recognition, through providing for others or the rituals of ceremonies. Local inhabitants are part of a great number of social relationships and networks through engagement in religious and community associations of various kinds, as well as through initiating and accepting individual relations to various authorities. For instance, in a difficult situation, they may draw upon fellow members of their *dahira* or women's association, who are bound to help through social obligations and the logic of mutual help, or ask for help from their *marabout*. They may also approach a local politician for economic assistance in exchange for political support, or contact the *délégué*, the imam or the local mosque for help. Of course, most people do not undertake all these solicitations at the same time, and not everyone has equal access to such resources. The main point is that people engage simultaneously in various relationships and associations, and thus societal fields and arenas, to secure a broad safety net or generate a social security function that can be used when needed in the future.

To analyse and capture this multi-activity in local network politics, a broad conception of what constitutes the political has been vital. This complex understanding of politics and the political is embraced in the conceptual framework of this project, combining elements from perspectives on state-society relations, postcolonial African politics and the logic of social practices. The aim is to grasp the plurality of the local political space and practices, and the power relations between actors. Such an extended view of politics requires that one does not delimit politics to the formal sphere of state institutions and political parties, but also includes informal practices and private arenas in everyday life, across social fields. It also necessitates the acknowledgement of the interrelation and agency of actors at various levels of the social stratification, as well as the material, symbolic and discursive aspects of politics. In addition, it is necessary to recognise that the context of political and economic crises informs the negotiation of exchanges and interaction in the many social relationships and networks that are used to access needed resources and promote interests. Such an enlarged notion of politics, informed by the Senegalese context and conceptual framework, has made it possible to explore and grasp the manifold ways of doing politics in Colobane. The study concludes with connections between local and national politics, and a paradox of changing continuities in the network politics of Colobane.

## The paradox of changing continuities

Throughout the analysis, I have demonstrated certain transformations in the local political space. These alterations mainly involve new discourses, but also some initial changes in practices. These are visible across fields in Colobane, and are linked to the more general systemic changes at the national level.

Thus, while local politics are still dominated by multi-activity in network politics, and hence the reproduction of established practices, the discursive changes, altered practices and general processes seen in national politics are also reflected in the local political practices and political space of Colobane. For instance, the general crisis of politics is apparent in the neighbourhood. This not only led to a delegitimation of the PS regime, but also affected the general opinion of national as well as local state institutions and politicians. Party politics is depicted as a dirty business of un-kept promises, despite the optimism and anticipated changes of the *Alternance*. In Colobane, the general scepticism and perceived lack of legitimacy of politicians and party politics have persisted, even after the new team came to power in the commune. Inhabitants who have experienced that the practices of the PS regime are reproduced under the new PDS-dominated municipal council, are critical of the prospects of change in local politics. Others express a general disappointment with the lack of realisation of the promises of new democratic politics or of solutions to socio-economic problems at the practical level of politics. This has created a society-induced pressure on local politicians to demonstrate themselves as different from ‘ordinary’ party politicians to obtain recognition and legitimate authority, for instance by promoting themselves as belonging to the neighbourhood, and by working for the neighbourhood and its inhabitants in various ways. While the discourse on new transparent and democratic politics created certain expectations among the population, the concurrent delegitimation of politics has made the inhabitants cautious in relation to local politics. However, as indicated above and discussed in chapter 7, they still approach local politicians for economic assistance and accept their offers of exchanges of resources through the patron-client logic.

These processes are evident also in relation to the local associational life, as discussed in chapters 10 and 11. Both members and leaders of associations are sceptical about party politics, and many emphasise the need for associational autonomy from politicians and

politics. At the same time they do accept approaches from politicians, or nurture links with political parties, to be able to secure funding or otherwise gain economic benefits. However, the crisis of legitimacy of politics threatens to spread also to associational leaders or the association as a whole if they become too involved in the internal struggles and competition of the local political field. This has become increasingly evident as a new discourse on associational development promotes a rejection of politics and development of partnership with NGOs. Young people are the most outspoken regarding these changes and the general discourse on the need for transparent, democratic and accountable politics and management.

Several of the alteration processes seen at the national level, above all new discourses, are particularly prominent among the youth in Colobane. For instance, they are the ones who most openly criticise politicians, and they question established authorities and practices through speaking and acting in new ways. This can be observed not only with regard to politicians or in relation to the local associational life, but also in the religious field of Colobane. Here, the discourse and aspiration towards democratic, accountable and transparent management politics and the questioning of habitual authority is evident in the local mosques. There are not only discursive changes, but also new practices manifested in some cases. As discussed in chapter 9, the power struggle in some mosques in Colobane has resulted in young men taking over responsibilities and becoming integrated in management committees. This has again led to actual or planned management changes, for instance in the politics of distribution and use of resources.

This generational change, which is discussed particularly in chapters 6 and 9, is also related to a debate on and questioning of the earlier habitual and almost automatic recognition and legitimacy of authorities. At the national level of politics, this was visible in the debate on differences between political and religious spheres and the related questioning of the authority of *marabouts*' orders and authority outside the religious field. This demonstrates a questioning of automatic authority, and how it is a result of negotiated political arrangements. In Colobane, this became evident in relation to the local notables, including the *délégués de quartier*. Their earlier habitual legitimacy has been questioned, particularly as a change of generation has taken place. The notables that established the neighbourhood are dying out and their recognition has not been automatically transferred to other elders. It seems that respect for elders continues, but that in terms of the authority and position of power as a notable, the population now focuses more on a person's qualities, work and ability to perform tasks and

fulfil obligations when they grant such recognition. Thus, in this general context, incidences of mismanagement and economic problems in the mosques generated action from resourceful young men with new ideas of management and religious activities. The delicacy of this power struggle and the process of management change in some local mosques have signalled sustained respect for elders, while their practices have been silently criticised by the very act that younger people have insisted on taking on the problems of the mosques. Thus, while various leaders of society, both nationally and locally, have kept their former respect and positions of power, they do not enjoy the same self-evident authority as earlier. Recognition seems to be increasingly dependent upon practices and performance.

Changes in the religious field, both new discourses that challenge established arrangements and altered practices, are among the general processes visible both at national and local levels. For instance, the changes in management in a couple of mosques in Colobane are also related to the new discourses in the religious field, partly challenging established ideas and practices. For instance, they lead to an increasing interest in religious instruction connected to the perceived greater importance of religious education. This was argued also in chapter 8, as a tendency in the religious associations in Colobane. This focus on religious instruction is probably influenced by the educational politics of reformist inspired movements, also taken up by the Sufi orders and their institutions and authorities at a more general level. Although the *marabouts* and Sufi brotherhoods are seldom directly criticised, both the younger generation and the elders express scepticism towards the close relations between politics and religion. At the local level, politicians who court imams for political support are seen as despicable. However, the most often pronounced critique is related to national politics, and Wade's close contact with the Mourides. He is seen as treating the other brotherhoods unfairly to the benefit of the Mouride order. There seems to be a growing conception that, while the *marabouts* are still valuable for religious followers, they are no longer needed by all Senegalese Muslims as intermediaries with God. Particularly educated young people seem to focus on a personal faith and relation to God, and thus the importance of individual instruction. While some of the younger people speak of the advantages of a unifying Islam and practices of local mosques that do not use order-specific prayers or practices, Sufi-Islam still keeps its solid position, as argued in chapters 4 and 8.

Local politics in Colobane are characterised by both the reproduction of established practices and multi-activity in network politics, as well as new discourses and a few changed practices

that create alterations in the local political space of the neighbourhood. This causes a situation of changing continuities and a paradoxical logic to local politics in Colobane.

On the one hand, there are continued expectations of clientelist exchanges of resources that are vital for both politicians and inhabitants to secure needed capital. On the other hand, there is the wish and hope for new politics related to and manifested in the new discourses evolving in several societal fields. This creates a twofold and paradoxical logic to political practices that must be balanced by various actors. For instance, both local politicians and associational leaders who are engaged in the political field, face a compound pressure to provide economic resources, and to change their practices in relation to new discourses to obtain transparent, accountable and democratic politics and management practices. Firstly, the rejection of politics emerging from the general political crisis has led people to see politics as dirty. This has been confirmed through their less fortunate experiences. In the context of the expectations related to the *Alternance*, this constitutes a pressure for changed practices of local politicians and a rejection of and distance from politics for associational leaders. This seems to be a process similar to the society-induced pressure that led to renegotiations of the social contract and led the *marabouts* to at least apparently, withdraw from the political field and stop giving voting orders to their followers. Secondly, and simultaneously, both local politicians and associational leaders face the expectations of political supporters for economic rewards, or of members who seek funding for their associations to engage in their planned activities. This makes them inclined to act in line with the established and routinised practices of the past.

It seems the pressing short-term need of economic resources, caused by the material basis of politics, leads to the reproduction of the practices that they actually wish to change.

Individuals need economic resources in their struggle to cope with everyday expenses, secure basic needs and improve the conditions for themselves and their families. Their need for safety, related to their poor living conditions and the general material scarcity, make them even more inclined to act in accordance with established, routinised and common sense practices, such as the clientelist politics of concessions, where political support may often provide direct material goods immediately. Since much needed money can be secured through personal relations in a situation of crisis, they cannot afford to be idealists on behalf of their goals and hopes of new democratic politics. Local politicians need to attain economic resources from their party or state institutions to be able to redistribute these to clients and supporters and obtain the recognition and authority needed in the struggles of the political

field. In the situation of continued economic crisis, local politicians also turn back to the exchanges that will secure short-time support and votes, even though these go against the popular hopes of democratic and accountable politics and related practices that over time could solve the legitimacy crisis of politicians. Thus, short-term interests and resulting practices may lead to the failure of the new politics to deliver the improved living conditions and political possibilities that are among their long-term goals.

## **The changing continuities of the *Alternance***

These concluding remarks and findings about the local political practices and political space in Colobane again draw attention to national politics, due to the underlying question of relations between the national and local level. Given that the major findings of this study are of changing continuities and paradoxical politics in Colobane, what is the situation of national politics after the *Alternance* and my last fieldwork in Dakar in 2003?

Co-existing with the hopes after the *Alternance* was the question of whether the new authorities, fronted by Wade, would break with the mode of government and the political practices that had characterised Senegal since independence (Diop 2006). All in all, it seems they have not, but have rather continued on the same course. In her article on the return of personalism in Senegalese politics, Mbow (2008) argues that despite the re-election of President Abdoulaye Wade in the presidential elections of 2007, the period of his rule since the *Alternance* in 2000 has been one of disappointment. The expectations that the change of regime would entail democratic consolidation have been undermined. She argues that there has been a (re)turn towards autocracy and patrimonialism that has made the Senegalese lose trust in their government and created a crisis of legitimacy (Mbow 2008:157).

While in opposition and during electoral campaigns, Wade criticised the corruption and power play of the PS and promised political reform for a parliamentary system, increased power to the judiciary and a continued democratic opening of political institutions (Beck 2002, 2008, Gellar 2005). Once in charge of the strong presidential system and controlling the resources of the Senegalese state, the system earlier condemned by Wade as deeply unfair and undemocratic appealed to the PDS and the *Sopi* coalition holding power (Creevey et al. 2005,

Dahou and Foucher 2004). Thus, Wade's promises were not kept, and the practice of the PS of controlling and adjusting electoral and institutional reform to retain power persists under PDS rule (Mozaffar and Vengroff 2002). At the present, with the Senate and *Conseil* recreated, only a few years after their dismissal, Senegal has about the same institutional devices as before the *Alternance* (Beck 2008, Diop 2006). The recentralisation of political and administrative power has led to the fact that Wade and his supporters now hold a near total control of the executive, legislative and judicial branches of government, and most local government councils (Gellar 2005). However, the attempts to increase power not only involved the monopolisation and enhancement of power around Wade and the presidency, but also the efficient removal of competitors. The coalition swiftly fell apart, Wade has frequently changed prime ministers, and opponents have been gagged through a continued co-opting (Diop 2006, Mbow 2008). Continuing much of the practices of the PS regime, Wade was increasingly critiqued for not being committed to the democratic projects and pluralism that he earlier promoted (Galvan 2001).

Wade and his PDS used their control of the state apparatus to privilege their supporters and extend their clientelist networks and support base (Beck 2008, Diop 2006). The patronage politics of the PS was continued by the PDS and Wade, who distributed a new car to each deputy in the national assembly, and gave out monthly supplements to government officials and stipends to supporting party leaders (Beck 2003, 2008, Gellar 2005). The corrupt practices that were earlier attacked have continued to take place, as PDS rulers and bureaucrats, like their predecessors, see and use state resources as their own. Political clientelism still serves as the main strategy for consolidating and sustaining a power base (Beck 2008, Galvan 2001). This has contributed to repeated accusations of corruption related to the management of resources also after the *Alternance* (Beck 2008, Diop 2006, Gellar 2005). It has also bred and reproduced the long-time factionalism characterising Senegalese politics in general and the PS in particular, in and under the PDS (Mbow 2008). The fragmentation of the coalition that helped Wade and the PDS to power was followed by expressions of internal divisions in the PDS, particularly evident in the tensions and open confrontations of Wade and his prime minister, Idrissa Seck, in 2004 (Beck 2008, Diop 2006). This factionalism is related to the continued personalised politics and power struggles of the PDS, and the battle for Wade's succession. This has become evident as the president's son, Karim Wade, has been given great responsibilities in the political and economic management of the state, through high-profile projects of great financial value (Diop 2006, Mbow 2008).



Regarding the politics towards *marabouts* and the Sufi orders, the shift to Wade did not involve any rupture of the ties between political and religious elites. As mentioned in chapter 4, he courted *marabouts* before the *Alternance*, and this has continued also after 2000 (Villalon 2004). However, he caused tumults when he proclaimed himself a Mouride *talibé*, or disciple (Sow 2003), and deviated from the politics of both Senghor and Diouf of not giving preferential treatment to any of the orders. On the day of his election in 2000, he went directly to Touba, where he was photographed kneeling before the *khalife générale* of the Mourides, Serigne Saliou, receiving his blessing (Villalon 2004, Villalon 2007). This generated unease among the Senegalese population and provoked further tension between the Sufi orders. Although he claimed Mouridism to be a personal rather than political choice, the situation has not improved, as Wade has promised to construct an international airport in Touba and continued to approach the *khalife générale*, alone or with delegations, before elections (Beck 2002, Villalon 2004, Villalon 2007). Prior to the legislative elections of 2001 he obtained his blessing, although not an official *ndigël* (Galvan 2001). In 2002, a PDS list for the local elections with Serigne Saliou's name was produced. Even though it was swiftly withdrawn, due to severe criticism and uproar, the political point was made. In a similar vein, ahead of the 2007 elections Serigne Saliou asserted that Wade would complete the modernisation of Touba if he was re-elected (Mbow 2008).

In other areas, the PDS and Wade have not only reproduced or continued the practices and strategies of the PS, but also contributed to a certain democratic backsliding, particularly with regard to civil liberties (Beck 2008). For instance, the media has been increasingly controlled and the free press experiences strong restrictions (Havard 2004). Conditions are similar to the situation in the late 1980s, before Diouf's period of liberalisation (Diop 2006). Oppositional politicians and journalists have experienced harassment and detainment, and books have been banned (Beck 2008, Diop 2006, Galvan 2001, Mbow 2008). Alongside the continuation of PS' practices that were earlier criticised, the violation of civil liberties demonstrate how the promises, hopes and expectations of the consolidation of democracy and changed political practices, both in local and national politics, have not been fulfilled (Diop 2006).

With regard to prospective solutions to the socio-economic crisis, it seems that the political authorities again are more concerned with retaining power and appropriating resources than improving the situation of the population and developing the productive forces of Senegal

(Diop 2006). The situation is thus similar to the one of continued socio-economic, political and legitimacy crises under PS; the context of the renegotiation of the social contract and eventual change of regime. Since the *Alternance*, there has been a general aggravation in living conditions and households experience shortages and increased prices of electricity, gas, petrol and food. There is despair among the youth and an increasing emigration (Diop 2006) that reflect the continued socio-economic crisis and perceived lack of viable opportunities and prospects for change. Some hold that marginalised youth, in particular, will come to see electoral democracy only as a justification or distraction from economic injustice (Galvan 2001). There are now calls for a national conference (Mbow 2008), to discuss the future of Senegal and find a solution to what seems an impasse with more continuities than changes.

The above statements regarding national Senegalese politics seem to link to the findings of this dissertation of reproduction of established practices in local politics, despite the hopes, expectations and changes related to the *Alternance*. There are links between political practices and processes at national and local levels. In Colobane, political practices and the local political space are characterised by multiple ways of ‘doing’ politics, mainly through engagement in a plurality of personal contacts and social networks across societal fields for access to symbolic and material resources. This is the case for both elite and more marginalised political actors; they all nurture, mobilise and negotiate individual and collective relationships marked by both unequal power relations and conflict, and mutuality and inclusion. Habitual and established practices and arrangements in various fields however also face discursive changes and some altered practices affecting the local political space. Thus, the situation of changing continuities and persistent political and socio-economic crises leads to paradoxical local politics, forcing local actors to juggle conflictual logics of practice in their multi-activity in the everyday network politics of Colobane.

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